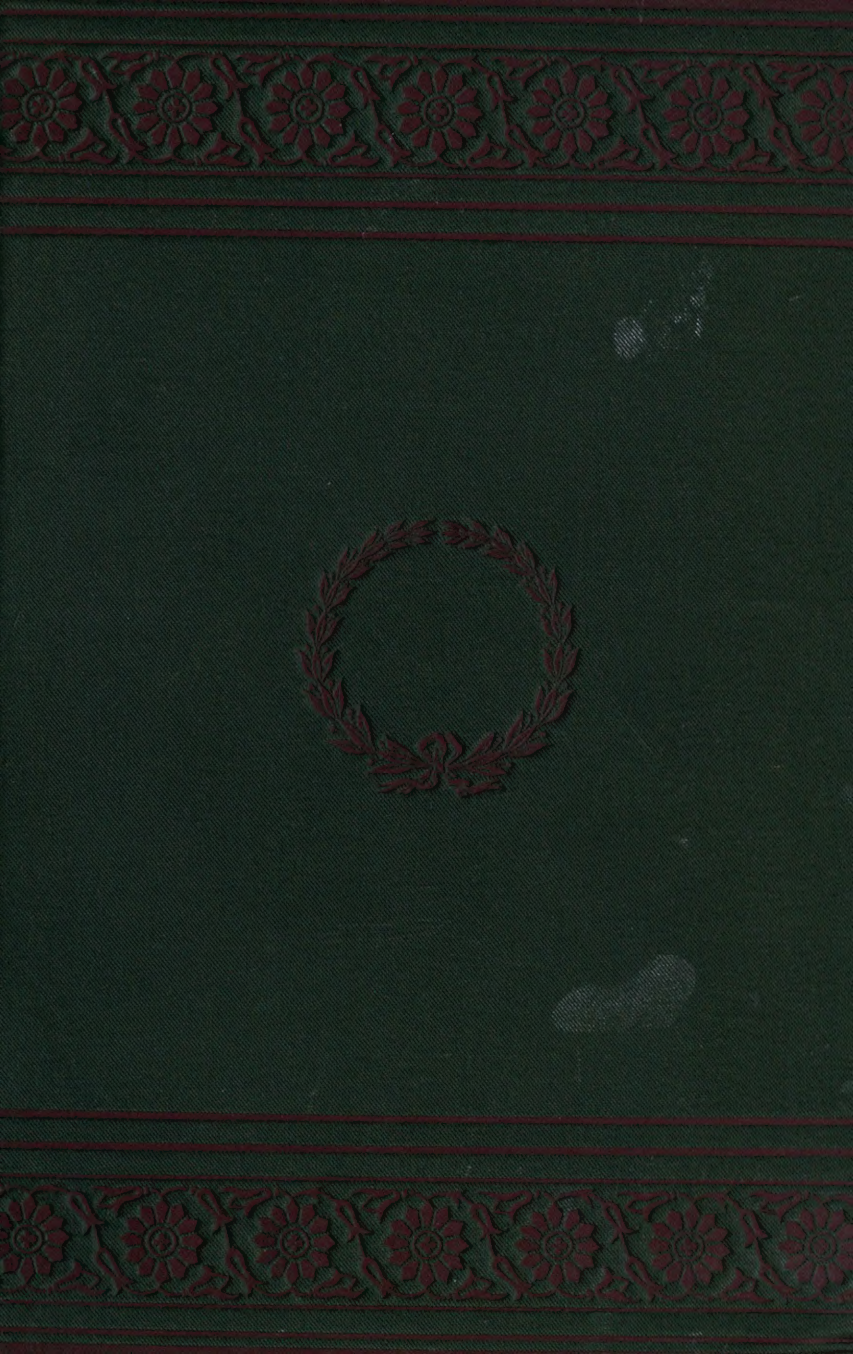

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THE

MISCELLANEOUS

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:
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PUBLISHERS' ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following collection of papers includes all the Essays published by HAZLITT in Paris under the title of the *Table Talk*, to which the following notice was prefixed :

"The work here offered to the public is a selection from the four volumes of *Table Talk*, printed in London. Should it meet with success, it will be followed by two other volumes of the same description, which will include all that the author wishes to preserve of his writings in this kind. The title may perhaps serve to explain what there is of peculiarity in the style or mode of treating the subjects. I had remarked that when I had written or thought upon a particular topic, and afterwards had occasion to speak of it with a friend, the conversation generally took a much wider range, and branched off into a number of indirect and collateral questions, which were not strictly connected with the original view of the subject, but which often threw a curious and striking light upon it, or upon human life in general. It therefore occurred to me as possible to combine the advantages of these two styles, the *literary* and *conversational ;* or after stating and enforcing some leading idea, to follow it up by such observations and reflections as would probably suggest themselves in discussing the same question in company with others. This seemed to me to promise a greater variety and richness, and perhaps a greater sincerity, than could be attained by a more precise and scholastic method. The same consideration had an influence on the familiarity and conversational idiom of the style which I have used How far the plan was feasible, or how far

I have succeeded in the execution of it, must be left to others to decide. I am also afraid of having too frequently attempted to give a popular air and effect to subtle distinctions and trains of thought; so that I shall be considered as too metaphysical by the careless reader, while by the more severe and scrupulous inquirer my style will be complained of as too light and desultory. To all this I can only answer that I have done not what I wished, but the best I could do; and I heartily wish it had been better.

A collection made in this manner for a foreign European market by the author himself, may also serve as the best introduction (the one nearest the writer's wishes, were he living) of a series of his works to the American public. The second part alluded to was never published at Paris, but it is not difficult to supply it on similar principles of selection, from the various scattered writings of the author. This will be attempted in the second part of the *Table-Talk*, to be published immediately, with no fear of the result, in the production of a brilliant volume of Essays. The volumes of the *Round Table*, and *Sketches and Essays*, published by the author's son, will be left untouched for future publication in this series, which will also include the various volumes of Lectures and Critical Papers of HAZLITT.

TABLE TALK.

ESSAY I.

On the Pleasure of Painting.

"THERE is a pleasure in painting which none but painters know." In writing, you have to contend with the world; in painting, you have only to carry on a friendly strife with Nature. You sit down to your task, and are happy. From the moment that you take up the pencil, and look Nature in the face, you are at peace with your own heart. No angry passions rise to disturb the silent progress of the work, to shake the hand, or dim the brow: no irritable humours are set afloat: you have no absurd opinions to combat, no point to strain, no adversary to crush, no fool to annoy—you are actuated by fear or favour to no man. There is "no juggling here," no sophistry, no intrigue, no tampering with the evidence, no attempt to make black white, or white black: but you resign yourself into the hands of a greater power, that of Nature, with the simplicity of a child, and the devotion of an enthusiast—

> "Study with joy
> Her manner, and with rapture taste her style."

The mind is calm, and full at the same time. The hand and eye are equally employed. In tracing the commonest object, a plant or the stump of a tree, you learn something every moment. You perceive unexpected differences, and discover likenesses where you looked for no such thing. You try to set down what you see—find out your error, and correct it. You need not play tricks, or purposely mistake: with all your pains, you are still far short of the mark. Patience grows out of the endless pursuit, and turns into a luxury. A streak in a flower, a wrinkle in a leaf, a tinge in a cloud, a stain in an old wall or ruin grey, are seized with avidity as the *spolia opima* of this sort of mental warfare, and furnish out labour for another half-day The hours pass on untold, without chagrin, and without weariness; nor would you ever wish to pass them otherwise. Innocence is joined with industry, pleasure with business; and the mind is satisfied, though it is not engaged in thinking or in doing harm.*

I have not much pleasure in writing these Essays, or in reading them afterwards; though I own I now and then meet with a phrase that I like, or a thought that strikes me as a true one. But after I begin them, I am only anxious to get to the end of them, which I am not sure I shall do, for I seldom see my way a page or even a sentence beforehand; and when I have as by a miracle escaped, I trouble myself little more about them. I sometimes have to write them twice over: then it is necessary to read the *proof*, to prevent mistakes by the printer; so that by the time they appear in a tangible shape, and one can con them over with a conscious, sidelong glance to the public approbation, they have lost their gloss and relish, and become "more tedious than a twice-told tale." For a person to read his own works over with any great delight, he ought first to forget that he ever wrote them. Familiarity naturally breeds contempt. It is, in fact, like poring fondly over a piece of blank paper: from repetition, the words convey no distinct meaning to the mind, are mere idle sounds, except that our vanity claims an interest and property in them. I have more satisfaction in my own thoughts than in dictating them to others: words are necessary to explain the impression of certain things upon me to the reader, but they rather weaken and draw a veil over than strengthen it to myself. However I might say with the poet, "My mind to me a kingdom is," yet I have little ambition "to set a throne or chair of state in the understandings of other men." The ideas we cherish most, exist best in a kind of shadowy abstraction,

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* There is a passage in Werter which contains a very pleasing illustration of this doctrine, and is as follows:

"About a league from the town is a place called Walheim. It is very agreeably situated on the side of a hill: from one of the paths which leads out of the village, you have a view of the whole country; and there is a good old woman who sells wine, coffee, and tea there; but better than all this, are two lime-trees before the church, which spread their branches over a little green, surrounded by barns and cottages. I have seen few places more refined and peaceful. I send for a chair and table from the old woman's, and there I drink my coffee and read Homer. It was by accident that I discovered this place one fine afternoon: all was perfect stillness; every body was in the fields, except a little boy about four years old, who was sitting on the ground, and holding between his knees a child of about six months; he pressed it to his bosom with his little arms, which made a sort of great chair for it; and notwithstanding the vivacity which sparkled in his eyes, he sat perfectly still. Quite delighted with the scene, I sat down on a plough opposite, and had great pleasure in drawing this little picture of brotherly tenderness. I added a bit of the hedge, the barn-door, and some broken cart-wheels, without any order, just as they happened to lie; and in about an hour I found I had made a drawing of great expression and very correct design, without having put in any thing of my own. This confirmed me in the resolution I had made before, only to copy nature for the future. Nature is inexhaustible, and alone forms the greatest masters Say what you will of rules, they alter the true features, and the natural expression."

> "Pure in the last recesses of the mind;"

and derive neither force nor interest from being exposed to public view. They are old-established acquaintance, and any change in them, arising from the adventitious ornaments of style or dress, is hardly to their advantage. After I have once written on a subject, it goes out of my mind: my feelings about it have been melted down into words, and *them* I forget. I have, as it were, discharged my memory of its habitual reckoning, and rubbed out the score of real sentiment. In future, it exists only for the sake of others.

But I cannot say, from my own experience, that the same process takes place in transferring our ideas to canvas; they gain more than they lose in the mechanical transformation. One is never tired of painting, because you have to set down not what you knew already, but what you have just discovered. In the former case, you translate feelings into words; in the latter, names into things. There is a continual creation out of nothing going on. With every stroke of the brush, a new field of inquiry is laid open; new difficulties arise, and new triumphs are prepared over them. By comparing the imitation with the original, you see what you have done, and how much you have still to do. The test of the senses is severer than that of fancy, and an overmatch even for the delusions of our self-love. One part of a picture shames another, and you determine to paint up to yourself, if you cannot come up to nature. Every object becomes lustrous from the light thrown back upon it by the mirror of art: and by the aid of the pencil we may be said to touch and handle the objects of sight. The air-wove visions that hover on the verge of existence have a bodily presence given them on the canvas: the form of beauty is changed into a substance: the dream and the glory of the universe is made "palpable to feeling as to sight."—And see! a rainbow starts from the canvas, with all its humid train of glory, as if it were drawn from its cloudy arch in heaven. The spangled landscape glitters with drops of dew after the shower. The "fleecy fools" shew their coats in the gleams of the setting sun. The shepherds pipe their farewell notes in the fresh evening air. And is this bright vision made from a dead dull blank, like a bubble reflecting the mighty fabric of the universe? We would think this miracle of Rubens's pencil possible to be performed? Who, having seen it, would not spend his life to do the like? See how the rich fallows, the bare stubble-field, the scanty harvest-home, drag in Rembrandt's landscapes! How often have I looked at them and nature, and tried to do the same, till the very "light thickened," and there was an earthiness in the feeling of the air! There is no end of the refinements of art and nature in this respect. One may look at the misty glimmering horizon, till the eye dazzles, and the imagination is lost in the hope to transfer the whole interminable expanse at one blow upon the canvas. Wilson said, he endeavoured to paint the effect of the motes dancing in the setting sun. At another time, a friend coming into his painting-room, when he was sitting on the ground in a melancholy posture, observed that his picture looked like a landscape after a shower: he started up with the greatest delight, and said, "That is the effect I intended to represent, but thought I had failed." Wilson was neglected; and, by degrees, neglected his art to apply himself to brandy. His hand became unsteady, so that it was only by repeated attempts that he could reach the place, or produce the effect he aimed at; and when he had done a little to a picture, he would say to any acquaintance who chanced to drop in, "I have painted enough for one day: come, let us go somewhere." It was not so Claude left his pictures, or his studies on the banks of the Tiber, to go in search of other enjoyments, or ceased to gaze upon the glittering sunny vales and distant hills; and while his eye drank in the clear sparkling hues and lovely forms of nature, his hand stamped them on the lucid canvas to remain there for ever!—One of the most delightful parts of my life was one fine summer, when I used to walk out of an evening to catch the last light of the sun, gemming the green slopes or russet lawns, and gilding tower or tree, while the blue sky gradually turning to purple and gold, or skirted with dusky grey, hung its broad marble pavement over all, as we see it in the great master of Italian landscape. But to come to a more particular explanation of the subject.

The first head I ever tried to paint was an old woman with the upper part of the face shaded by her bonnet, and I certainly laboured it with great perseverance. It took me numberless sittings to do it. I have it by me still, and sometimes look at it with surprise, to think how much pains were thrown away to little purpose,—yet not altogether in vain, if it taught me to see good in every thing, and to know that there is nothing vulgar in nature seen with the eye of science or of true art. Refinement creates beauty everywhere: it is the grossness of the spectator that discovers nothing but grossness in the object. Be this as it may, I spared no pains to do my best. If art was long, I thought that life was so too at that moment. I got in the general effect the first day; and pleased and surprised enough I was at my success. The rest was a work of time—of weeks and months (if need were), of patient toil and careful finishing. I had seen an old head by Rembrandt at Burleigh-House; and if I could produce a head at all like Rembrandt in a year, in my life-time, it would be glory and felicity and wealth and fame enough for me! The head I had seen at Burleigh was an exact and wonderful fac-simile of nature, and I resolved to make mine (as nearly as I could) an exact fac-simile of nature. I did not then, nor do I now believe with Sir Joshua, that the perfection of art consists in giving general appearances without individual details, but in giving general appearances with individual details. Otherwise, I had done my work the first day. But I saw something more in nature than general effect, and I thought it worth my while to give it in the picture. There was a gorgeous effect of light and shade: but there was a delicacy as well as depth in the *chiaro-scuro*, which I was bound to follow into all its dim and scarce perceptible variety of tone and shadow. Then I had to make the transition from a strong light to as dark a shade, preserving the masses, but gradually softening off the intermediate parts. It was so in nature: the difficulty was to make it so in the copy. I tried, and failed again and again; I strove harder, and succeeded, as I thought. The wrinkles in Rembrandt were not hard lines; but broken and irregular. I saw the same appearance in nature, and strained every nerve to give it. If I could hit off this crumbling appearance, and insert the reflected light in the furrows of old age in half a morning, I did not think I had lost a day. Beneath the shrivelled yellow parchment look of the skin, there was here and there a streak of blood-colour tinging the face; this I made a point of conveying, and did not cease to compare what I saw with what I did (with jealous, lynx-eyed watchfulness) till I succeeded to the best of my ability and judgment. How many revisions were there! How many attempts to catch an expression, which I had seen the day before! How often did we strive to get the old position, and wait for the return of the same light! There was a puckering up of the lips, a cautious introversion of the eye under the shadow of the bonnet, indicative of the feebleness and suspicion of old age, which at last we managed, after many trials and some quarrels, to a tolerable nicety. The picture was never finished, and I might have gone on with it to the present hour.* I used to set it on the ground when my day's work was done, and saw revealed to me with swimming eyes the birth of new hopes and of a new world of objects.—The painter thus learns to look at nature with different eyes. He before saw her "as in a glass darkly, but now face to face." He understands the texture and meaning of the visible universe, and "sees into the life of things," not by the help of mechanical instruments, but of the improved exercise of his faculties, and an intimate sympathy with nature. The meanest thing is not lost upon him, for he looks at it with an eye to itself, not merely to his own vanity or interest, or the opinion of the world. Even where there is neither beauty nor use—if that ever were—still there is truth, and a sufficient source of gratification in the indulgence of curiosity and activity of mind. The humblest painter is a true scholar: and the best of scholars—the scholar of nature. For myself, and for the real comfort and satisfaction of the thing, I had rather have been Jan Steen, or Gerard Dow, than the greatest casuist or philologer that ever lived. The painter does not view things in clouds or "mist, the common gloss of theologians," but applies the same standard of truth and disinterested spirit of inquiry, that influence his daily practice, to other subjects. He perceives form; he distinguishes character. He reads men and books with an intuitive glance. He is a critic as well as a connoisseur. The conclusions he draws are clear and convincing, because they are taken from actual experience. He is not a fanatic, a dupe, or a slave: for the habit of seeing for himself also disposes him to judge for himself. The most sensible men I know (taken as a class) are painters; that is, they are the most lively observers of what passes in the world about them, and the closest observers of what passes in their own minds. From their profession they in general mix more with the world than authors, and if they have not the same fund of acquired knowledge, are obliged to rely more on individual sagacity. I might mention the names of Opie, Fuseli, Northcote, as persons distinguished for striking description and acquaintance with the subtle traits of character.* Painters in ordinary society, or in obscure situations where their value is not known, and they are treated with neglect and indifference, have sometimes a forward self-sufficiency of manner: but this is not so much their fault as that of others. Perhaps their want of regular education may also be in fault in such cases. Richardson, who is very tenacious of the respect in which the profession ought to be held, tells a story of Michal Angelo, that after a quarrel between him and Pope Julius II., "upon account of a slight the artist conceived the pontiff had put upon him, Michael Angelo was introduced by a bishop, who, thinking to serve the artist by it, made it an argument that the Pope should be reconciled to him, because men of his profession were commonly ignorant, and of no consequence otherwise: his holiness, enraged at the bishop, struck him with his staff, and told him, it was he that was the blockhead, and affronted the man himself would not offend; the prelate was driven out of the chamber, and Michal Angelo had the Pope's benediction accompanied with presents. This bishop had fallen into the vulgar error, and was rebuked accordingly."

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* It is at present covered with a thick slough of oil and varnish (the perishable vehicle of the English school) like an envelope of gold-beaters' skin, so as to be hardly visible.

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* Men in business, who are answerable with their fortunes for the consequences of their opinions, and are therefore accustomed to ascertain pretty accurately the grounds on which they act, before they commit themselves on the event, are often men of remarkably quick and sound judgments. Artists in like manner must know tolerably well what they are about, before they can bring the result of their observations to the test of ocular demonstration.

Besides the employment of the mind, painting exercises the body. It is a mechanical as well as a liberal art. To do any thing, to dig a hole in the ground, to plant a cabbage, to hit a mark, to move a shuttle, to work a pattern,—in a word, to attempt to produce any effect, and to *succeed*, has something in it that gratifies the love of power, and carries off the restless activity of the mind of man. Indolence is a delightful but distressing state: we must be doing something to be happy. Action is no less necessary than thought to the instinctive tendencies of the human frame; and painting combines them both incessantly.* The hand furnishes a practical test of the correctness of the eye; and the eye, thus admonished, imposes fresh tasks of skill and industry upon the hand. Every stroke tells, as the verifying of a new truth; and every new observation, the instant it is made, passes into an act and emanation of the will. Every step is nearer what we wish, and yet there is always more to do. In spite of the facility, the fluttering grace, the evanescent hues, that play round the pencil of Rubens and Vandyke, however I may admire, I do not envy them this power so much as I do the slow, patient, laborious execution of Correggio, Leonardo da Vinci, and Andrea del Sarto, where every touch appears conscious of its charge, emulous of truth, and where the painful artist has "so distinctly wrought,"

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* The famous Schiller used to say, that he found the great happiness of life, after all, to consist in the discharge of some mechanical duty.

> "That you might almost say his picture thought!"

In the one case, the colours seem breathed on the canvas as by magic, the work and the wonder of a moment: in the other, they seem inlaid in the body of the work, and as if it took the artist years of unremitting labour, and of delightful never-ending progress to perfection.* Who would wish ever to come to the close of such works,—not to dwell on them, to return to them, to be wedded to them to the last? Rubens, with his florid, rapid style, complained that when he had just learned his art, he should be forced to die. Leonardo, in the slow advances of his, had lived long enough!

Painting is not, like writing, what is properly understood by a sedentary employment. It requires not, indeed, a strong, but a continued and steady exertion of muscular power. The precision and delicacy of the manual operation makes up for the want of vehemence,—as to balance himself for any time in the same position the rope-dancer must strain every nerve. Painting for a whole morning gives one as excellent an appetite for one's dinner, as old Abraham Tucker acquired for his by riding over Banstead Downs. It is related of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that "he took no other exercise than what he used in his painting-room,"—the writer means, in walking backwards and forwards to look at his picture; but the act of painting itself, of laying on the colours in the proper place and proper quantity, was a much harder exercise than this alternate receding from and returning to the picture. The last would be rather a relaxation and relief than an effort. It is not to be wondered at, that an artist like Sir Joshua, who delighted so much in the sensual and practical part of his art, should have found himself at a considerable loss when the decay of his sight precluded him, for the last year or two of his life, from the following up of his profession,—"the source," according to his own remark, "of thirty years' uninterrupted enjoyment and prosperity to him." It is only those who never think at all, or else who have accustomed themselves to brood invariably on abstract ideas, that never feel *ennui*.

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* The rich *impasting* of Titian and Giorgione combines something of the advantages of both these styles, the felicity of the one with the carefulness of the other, and is perhaps to be preferred to either.

To give one instance more, and then I will have done with this rambling discourse. One of my first attempts was a picture of my father, who was then in a green old age, with strong-marked features, and scarred with the small-pox. I drew it with a broad light crossing the face, looking down, with spectacles on, reading. The book was Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, in a fine old binding, with Gribelin's etchings. My father would as lieve it had been any other book; but for him to read was to be content, was "riches fineless." The sketch promised well; and I set to work to finish it, determined to spare no time nor pains. My father was willing to sit as long as I pleased; for there is a natural desire in the mind of man to sit for one's picture, to be the object of continued attention, to have one's likeness multiplied; and besides his satisfaction in the picture, he had some pride in the artist, though he would rather I should have written a sermon than have painted like Rembrandt or like Raphael! Those winter days, with the gleams of sunshine coming through the chapel-windows, and cheered by the notes of the robin redbreast in our garden (that "ever in the haunch of winter sings")—as my afternoon's work drew to a close,—were among the happiest of my life. When I gave the effect I intended to any part of the picture for which I had prepared my colours when I imitated the roughness of the skin by a lucky stroke of the pencil, when I hit the clear pearly tone of a vein, when I gave the ruddy complexion of health, the blood circulating under the broad shadows of one side of the face, I thought my fortune made; or rather it was already more than made, in my fancying that I might one day be able to say with Correggio, "*I also am a painter!*" It was an idle thought, a boy's conceit; but it did not make me less happy at the time. I used regularly to set my work in the chair to look at it through the long evenings; and many a time did I return to take leave of it, before I could go to bed at night. I remember sending it with a throbbing heart to the Exhibition, and seeing it hung up there by the side of one of the Honourable Mr. Skeffington (now Sir George). There was nothing in common between them, but that they were the portraits of two very good-natured men. I think, but am not sure, that I finished this portrait (or another afterwards) on the same day that the news of the battle of Austerlitz came; I walked out in the afternoon, and, as I returned, saw the evening star set over a poor man's cottage with other thoughts and feelings than I shall ever have again. O for the revolution of the great Platonic year, that those times might come over again! I could sleep out the three hundred and sixty-five thousand intervening years very contentedly!—The picture is left: the table, the chair, the window where I learned to construe Livy, the chapel where my father preached, remain where they were; but he himself is gone to rest, full of years, of faith, of hope, and charity!

ESSAY II.

The same subject continued.

The painter not only takes a delight in nature, he has a new and exquisite source of pleasure opened to him in the study and contemplation of works of art—

> "Whate'er Lorraine light touch'd with soft'ning hue,
> Or savage Rosa dash'd, or learn'd Poussin drew."

He turns aside to view a country-gentleman's seat with eager looks, thinking it may contain some of the rich products of art. There is an air round Lord Radnor's park, for there hang the two Claudes, the *Morning* and *Evening of the Roman Empire*—round Wilton-house, for there is Vandyke's picture of the Pembroke family—round Blenheim, for there is his picture of the Duke of Buckingham's children and the most magnificent collection of Rubenses in the world—at Knowsley, for there is Rembrandt's *Hand-writing on the Wall*—and at Burleigh, for there are some of Guido's angelic heads. The young artist makes a pilgrimage to each of these places, eyes them wistfully at a distance, "bosomed high in tufted trees," and feels an interest in them of which the owner is scarce conscious: he enters the well-swept walks and echoing archways, passes the threshold, is led through wainscotted rooms, is shown the furniture, the rich hangings, the tapestry, the massy services of plate—and, at last, is ushered into the room where his treasure is, the object of his vows—some speaking face or bright landscape! It is stamped on his brain, and lives there thenceforward, a clue to nature, and a test of art. He furnishes out the chambers of the mind from the spoils of time, picks and chooses which shall have the best places—nearest his heart. He goes away richer than he came, richer than the possessor; and thinks that he may one day return, when he perhaps shall have done something of the same kind, or even from failure shall have learned to admire truth and genius more.

My first initiation in the mysteries of the art was at the Orleans Gallery: it was there I formed my taste, such as it is; so that I am irreclaimably of the old school in painting. I was staggered when I saw the works there collected, and looked at them with wondering and with longing eyes. A mist passed away from my sight: the scales fell off. A new sense came upon me, a new heaven and a new earth stood before me. I saw the soul speaking in the face,—" hands that the rod of empire had swayed" in mighty ages past—" a forked mountain or blue promontory,"

———" with trees upon't
That nod unto the world, and mock our eyes with air."

Old Time had unlocked his treasures and Fame stood portress at the door. We had all heard of the names of Titian, Raphael, Guido, Domenichino, the Caracci—but to see them face to face, to be in the same room with their deathless productions, was like breaking some potent spell—was almost an effect of necromancy! From that time I lived in a world of pictures. Battles, sieges, speeches in parliament, seemed mere idle noise and fury, " signifying nothing," compared with those mighty works and dreaded names that spoke to me in the eternal silence of thought. This was the more remarkable, as it was but a short time before that I was not only totally ignorant of but insensible to the beauties of art. As an instance, I remember that one afternoon I was reading the Provoked Husband with the highest relish, with a green woody landscape of Ruysdael or Hobbima just before me, at which I looked off the book now and then, and wondered what there could be in that sort of work to satisfy or delight the mind, at the same time asking myself, as a speculative question, whether I should ever feel an interest in it like what I took in reading Vanbrugh and Cibber?

I had made some progress in painting when I went to the Louvre to study, and I never did any thing afterwards. I never shall forget conning over the Catalogue which a friend lent me just before I set out. The pictures, the names of the painters, seemed to relish in the mouth. There was one of Titian's Mistress at her toilette. Even the colours with which the painter had adorned her hair were not more golden, more amiable to sight, than those which played round and tantalized my fancy ere I saw the picture. There were two portraits by the same hand—" A young nobleman with a glove" —another, "a Companion to it"—I read the description over and over with fond expectancy, and filled up the imaginary outline with whatever I could conceive of grace and dignity and an antique *gusto*—all but equal to the original. There was the Transfiguration too. With what awe I saw it in my mind's eye, and was overshadowed with the spirit of the artist! Not to have been disappointed with these works afterwards, was the highest compliment I can pay to their transcendent merits. Indeed, it was from seeing other works of the same great masters that I had formed a vague, but no disparaging idea of these.—The first day I got there, I was kept for some time in the French Exhibition-room, and thought I should not be able to get a sight of the Old Masters. I just caught a peep at them through the door (vile hindrance!) like looking out of purgatory into paradise—from Poussin's noble mellow-looking landscapes to where Rubens hung out his gaudy banner, and down the glimmering vista to the rich jewels of Titian and the Italian school. At last, by much importunity, I was admitted, and lost not an instant in making use of my new privilege. It was *un beau jour* to me. I marched delighted through a quarter of a mile of the proudest efforts of the mind of man, a whole creation of genius, a universe of art! I ran the gauntlet of all the schools from the bottom to the top; and in the end got admitted into the inner room, where they had been repairing some of their greatest works. Here the Transfiguration, the St. Peter Martyr, and the St. Jerome of Domenichino, stood on the floor, as if they had bent their knees, like camels stooping, to unlade their riches to the spectator. On one side, on an easel, stood Hippolito de Medici (a portrait by Titian) with a boar-spear in his hand, looking through those he saw, till you turned away from the keen glance: and thrown together in heaps were landscapes of the same hand, green pastoral hills and vales, and shepherds piping to their mild mistresses underneath the flowering shade. Reader, "if thou hast not seen the

Louvre, thou'rt damned!"—for thou hast not seen the choicest remains of the works of art; or thou hast not seen all these together, with their mutually reflected glories. I say nothing of the statues; for I know but little of sculpture, and never liked any, till I saw the Elgin Marbles.... Here, for four months together, I strolled and studied, and daily heard the warning sounds—"*Quatre heures passées, il faut fermer, citoyens*"—(Ah! why did they ever changetheir style?) muttered in coarse provincial French; and brought away with me some loose draughts and fragments, which I have been forced to part with, like drops of life-blood, for "hard money." How often, thou tenantless mansion of godlike magnificence—how often has my heart since gone a pilgrimage to thee!

It has been made a question, whether the artist, or the mere man of taste and natural sensibility, receives most pleasure from the contemplation of works of art? And I think this question might be answered by another as a sort of *experimentum crucis*, namely, whether any one out of that "number numberless" of mere gentlemen and amateurs, who visited Paris at the period here spoken of, felt as much interest, as much pride or pleasure, in this display of the most striking monuments of art, as the humblest student would? The first entrance into the Louvre would be only one of the events of his journey, not an event in his life, remembered ever after with thankfulness and regret. He would explore it with the same unmeaning curiosity and idle wonder as he would the Regalia in the Tower, or the Botanic Specimens in the *Jardin des Plantes*, but not with the fond enthusiasm of an artist. How should he? His is "casual fruition, joyless, unendeared." But the painter is wedded to his art, the mistress, queen, and idol of his soul. He has embarked his all in it, fame, time, fortune, peace of mind, his hopes in youth, his consolation in age: and shall he not feel a more intense interest in whatever relates to it than the mere indolent trifler? Natural sensibility alone, without the entire application of the mind to that one object, will not enable the possessor to sympathize with all the degrees of beauty and power in the conceptions of a Titian or a Correggio; but it is he only who does this, who follows them into all their force and matchless grace, that does or can feel their full value. Knowledge is pleasure as well as power. No one but the artist, who has studied nature and contended with the difficulties of art, can be apprised of the beauties, or intoxicated with a passion for painting. No one who has not devoted his life and soul to the pursuit of art, can feel the same exultation in its brightest ornaments and loftiest triumphs which an artist does. Where the treasure is, there the heart is also. It is now seventeen years since I was studying in the Louvre (and I have long since given up all thoughts of the art as a profession), but long after I returned, and even still, I sometimes dream of being there again—of asking for the old pictures—and not finding them, or finding them changed or faded from what they were, I cry myself awake! What gentleman-amateur ever does this at such a distance of time,—that is, ever received pleasure or took interest enough in them to produce so lasting an impression?

But it is said, that if a person had the same natural taste, and the same acquired knowledge as an artist, without the petty interests and technical notions, he would derive a purer pleasure from seeing a fine portrait, a fine landscape, and so on. This however is not so much begging the question as asking an impossibility: he cannot have the same insight into the end without having studied the means; nor the same love of art without the same habitual and exclusive deference to it. Painters are, no doubt, often actuated by jealousy, partiality, and a sordid attention to that only which they find useful to themselves in painting. Wilkie has been seen poring over the texture of a Dutch cabinet-picture, so that he could not see the picture itself. But this is the perversion and pedantry of the profession, not its true or genuine spirit. If Wilkie had never looked at any thing but *megilps* and handling, he never would have put the soul of life and manners into his pictures as he has done. Another objection is, that the instrumental parts of the art, the means, the first rudiments, paints, oils, and brushes, are painful or disgusting; and that the consciousness of the difficulty and anxiety with which perfection has been attained, must take away from the pleasure of the finest performance. This, however, is only an additional proof of the greater pleasure derived by the artist from his profession; for these things which are said to interfere with and destroy the common interest in works of art, do not disturb him; he never once thinks of them, he is absorbed in the pursuit of a higher object; he is intent, not on the means but on the end; he is taken up, not with the difficulties, but with the triumph over them. As in the case of the anatomist, who overlooks many things in the eagerness of his search after abstract truth; or the alchemist who, while he is raking into his soot and furnaces, lives in a golden dream—a lesser gives way to a greater object. But it is pretended that the painter may be supposed to submit to the unpleasant part of the process only for the sake of the fame or profit in view. So far is this from being a true state of the case, that I will venture to say, in the instance of a friend of mine who has lately succeeded in an important undertaking in his art, that not all the fame he has acquired, not all the money he has received from thousands of admiring spectators, not all the newspaper puffs,—nor even the praise of the Edinburgh Review,—not all these, put together, ever gave him at any time the same genuine, undoubted satisfaction as any one half-hour employed in the ardent and propitious pursuit of his art—in finishing to his heart's content a foot, a hand, or even a piece of drapery. What is the state of mind of an artist while he is at work? He is then in the act of realizing the highest idea he can form of beauty or grandeur: he conceives, he embodies that which he understands and loves best: that is, he is in full and perfect possession of that which is to him the source of the highest happiness and intellectual excitement which he can enjoy.

In short, as a conclusion to this argument, I will mention a circumstance which fell under my knowledge the other day. A friend had bought a print of Titian's Mistress, the same to which I have alluded above. He was anxious to show it me on this account. I told him it was a spirited engraving, but it had not the look of the original. I believe he thought this fastidious, till I offered to shew him a rough sketch of it, which I had by me. Having seen this, he said he perceived exactly what I meant, and could not bear to look at the print afterwards. He had good sense enough to see the difference in the individual instance; but a person better acquainted with Titian's manner and with art in general, that is, of a more cultivated and refined taste, would know that it was a bad print, without having any immediate model to compare it with. He would perceive with a glance of the eye, with a sort of instinctive feeling, that it was hard, and without that bland, expansive, and nameless expression which always distinguished Titian's most famous works. Any one who is accustomed to a head in a picture can never reconcile himself to a print from it: but to the ignorant they are both the same. To a vulgar eye there is no difference between a Guido and a daub, between a penny-print or the vilest scrawl, and the most finished performance. In other words, all that excellence which lies between these two extremes,—all, at least, that marks the excess above mediocrity,—all that constitutes true beauty, harmony, refinement, grandeur, is lost upon the common observer. But it is from this point that the delight, the glowing raptures of the true adept commence. An uninformed spectator may like an ordinary drawing better than the ablest connoisseur; but for that very reason he cannot like the highest specimens of art so well. The refinements, not only of execution, but of truth and nature, are inaccessible to unpractised eyes. The exquisite gradations in a sky of Claude's are not perceived by such persons, and consequently the harmony cannot be felt. Where there is no conscious apprehension, there can be no conscious pleasure. Wonder at the first sight of works of art may be the effect of ignorance and novelty; but real admiration and permanent delight in them are the growth of taste and knowledge. "I would not wish to have your eyes," said a good-natured man to a critic, who was finding fault with a picture, in which the other saw no blemish. Why so? The idea which prevented him from admiring this inferior production was a higher idea of truth and beauty which was ever present with him, and a continual source of pleasing and lofty contemplations. It may be different in a taste for outward luxuries and the privations of mere sense; but the idea of perfection, which acts as an intellectual foil, is always an addition, a support, and a proud consolation!

Richardson, in his Essays, which ought to be better known, has left some striking examples of the felicity and infelicity of artists, both as it relates to their external fortune, and to the practice of their art. In speaking of *the knowledge of hands*, he exclaims—"When one is considering a picture or a drawing, one at the same time thinks this was done by him* who had many extraordinary endowments of body and mind, but was withal very capricious; who was honoured in life and death, expiring in the arms of one of the greatest princes of that age, Francis I., king of France, who loved him as a friend. Another is of him† who lived a long and happy life, beloved of Charles V., emperor; and many others of the first princes of Europe. When one has another in hand, we think this was done by one‡ who so excelled in three arts, as that any of them in that degree had rendered him worthy of immortality; and one moreover that durst contend with his sovereign (one of the haughtiest popes that ever was) upon a slight offered to him, and extricated himself with honour. Another is the work of him§ who, without any one exterior advantage but mere strength of genius, had the most sublime imaginations, and executed them accordingly, yet lived and died obscurely. Another we shall consider as the work of him‖ who restored Painting when it had almost sunk; of him whom art made honourable, but who neglecting and despising greatness with a sort of cynical pride, was treated suitably to the figure he gave himself, not his intrinsic worth: which, not having philosophy enough to bear it, broke his heart. Another is done by one¶ who (on the contrary) was a fine gentleman and lived in great magnificence, and was much honoured by his own and foreign princes; who was a courtier, a statesman, and a painter; and so much all these, that when he acted in either character, *that* seemed to be his business, and the others his diversion. I say when one thus reflects, besides the pleasure arising from the beauties and excellencies of the work, the fine ideas it gives us of natural things, the noble way of thinking it may suggest to us, an additional pleasure results from the above considerations. But, oh! the pleasure, when a connoisseur and lover of art has before him a picture or drawing, of which he can say, this is the hand, these are the thoughts of him** who was one of the politest, best-natured gentlemen that ever was; and beloved and assisted by the greatest wits and the greatest men then in Rome: of him who lived in great fame, honour, and magnificence, and died extremely lamented: and missed a cardinal's hat only by dying a few months too soon; but was particularly esteemed and favoured by two popes, the only ones who filled the chair of St. Peter in his time, and as great men as ever sat there since that apostle, if at leas he ever did: one, in short, who could have been a Leonardo, a Michael Angelo, a Titian, a Correggio, a Parmegiano, an Annibal, a Rubens, or any other whom he pleased, but none of them could ever have been a Rafaelle."

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* Leonardo da Vinci. † Titian. ‡ Michael Angelo.
§ Correggio. ‖ Annibal Caracci. ¶ Rubens
** Rafaelle.

The same writer speaks feelingly of the change in the style of different artists from their change of fortune, and as the circumstances are little known, I will quote the passage relating to two of them:

"Guido Reni, from a prince-like affluence of fortune (the just reward of his angelic works), fell to a condition like that of a hired servant to one who supplied him with money for what he did at a fixed rate; and that by his being bewitched with a passion for gaming, whereby he lost vast sums of money; and even what he got in this his state of servitude by day, he commonly lost at night: nor could he ever be cured of this cursed madness. Those of his works, therefore, which he did in this unhappy part of his life, may easily be conceived to be in a different style to what he did before, which in some things, that is, in the airs of his heads (in the gracious kind), had a delicacy in them peculiar to himself, and almost more than human. But I must not multiply instances. Parmegiano is one that alone takes in all the several kinds of variation, and all the degrees of goodness, from the lowest of the indifferent up to the sublime. I can produce evident proofs of this in so easy a gradation, that one cannot deny but that he that did this, might do that, and very probably did so and thus one may ascend and descend, like the angels on Jacob' ladder, whose foot was upon the earth, but its top reached to heaven.

"And this great man had his unlucky circumstance: he became mad after the philosopher's stone, and did but very little in painting or drawing afterwards. Judge what that was, and whether there was not an alteration of style from what he had done before this devil possessed him. His creditors endeavoured to exorcise him, and did him some good, for he set himself to work again in his own way: but if a drawing I have of a Lucretia be that he made for his last picture, as it probably is (Vasari says that was the subject of it), it is an evident proof of his decay: it is good indeed, but it wants much of the delicacy which is commonly seen in his works; and so I always thought before I knew or imagined it to be done in his ebb of genius."—*Science of a Connoisseur.*

We have had two artists of our own country, whose fate has been as singular as it was hard. Gandy was a portrait-painter in the beginning of the last century, whose heads were said to have come near to Rembrandt's; and he was the undoubted prototype of Sir Joshua Reynolds's style. Yet his name has scarcely been heard of; and his reputation, like his works, never extended beyond his native county. What did he think of himself and of a fame so bounded! Did he ever dream he was indeed an artist? Or how did this feeling in him differ from the vulgar conceit of the lowest pretender? The best known of his works is a portrait of an alderman of Exeter, in some public building in that city.

Poor Dan Stringer! Forty years ago he had the finest hand and the clearest eye of any artist of his time, and produced heads and drawings that would not have disgraced a brighter period in the art. But he fell a martyr (like Burns) to the society of country-gentlemen, and then of those whom they would consider as more his equals. I saw him many years ago when he treated the masterly sketches he had by him (one in particular of the group of citizens in Shakspear "swallowing the tailor's news") as "bastards of his genius, not his children;" and seemed to have given up all thoughts of his art. Whether he is since dead, I cannot say: the world do not so much as know that he ever lived!

ESSAY III.

On the Past and Future.

I HAVE naturally but little imagination, and am not of a very sanguine turn of mind. I have some desire to enjoy the present good, and some fondness for the past; but I am not at all given to building castles in the air, nor to look forward with much confidence or hope to the brilliant illusions held out by the future. Hence I have perhaps been led to form a theory, which is very contrary to the common notions and feelings on the subject, and which I will here try to explain as well as I can.—When Sterne in the Sentimental Journey told the French Minister that if the French people had a fault, it was that they were too serious, the latter replied that if that was his opinion, he must defend it with all his might, for he would have all the world against him; so I shall have enough to do to get well through the present argument.

I cannot see, then, any rational or logical ground for that mighty difference in the value which mankind generally set upon the past and future, as if the one was every thing, and the other nothing, of no consequence whatever. On the other hand, I conceive that the past is as real and substantial a part of our being, that it is as much a *bona fide*, undeniable consideration in the estimate of human life, as the future can possibly be. To say that the past is of no importance, unworthy of a moment's regard, because it has gone by, and is no longer any thing, is an argument that cannot be held to any purpose: for if the past has ceased to be, and is therefore to be accounted nothing in the scale of good or evil, the future is yet to come, and has never been any thing. Should any one choose to assert that the present only is of any value in a strict and positive sense, because that alone has a real existence, that we should seize the instant good, and give all else to the winds, I can understand what he means (though perhaps he does not himself*): but I cannot comprehend how this distinction between that which has a downright and sensible, and that which has only a remote and airy existence, can be applied to establish the preference of the future over the past; for both are in this point of view equally ideal, absolutely nothing, except as they are conceived of by the mind's eye, and are thus rendered present to the thoughts and feelings. Nay, the one is even more imaginary, a more fantastic creature of the brain than the other, and the interest we take in it more shadowy and gratuitous; for the future, on which we lay so much stress, may never come to pass at all, that is, may never be embodied into actual existence in the whole course of events, whereas the past has certainly existed once, has received the stamp of truth, and left an image of itself behind. It is so far then placed beyond the possibility of doubt, or as the poet has it,

> "Those joys are lodg'd beyond the reach of fate."

It is not, however, attempted to be denied that though the future is nothing at present, and has no immediate interest while we are speaking, yet it is of the utmost consequence in itself, and of the utmost interest to the individual, because it *will have* a real existence, and we have an idea of it as existing in time to come. Well, then, the past also has no real existence; the actual sensation and the interest belonging to it are both fled; but it *has had* a real existence, and we can still call up a vivid recollection of it as having once been; and therefore, by parity of reasoning, it is not a thing perfectly insignificant in itself, nor wholly indifferent to the mind, whether it ever was or not. Oh no! Far from it! Let us not rashly quit our hold upon the past, when perhaps there may be little else left to bind us to existence. It is nothing to have been, and to have been happy or miserable? Or is it a matter of no moment to think whether I have been one or the other? Do I delude myself, do I build upon a shadow or a dream, do I dress up in the gaudy garb of idleness and folly a pure fiction, with nothing answering to it in the universe of things and the records of truth, when I look back with fond delight or with tender regret to that which was at one time to me *my all*, when I revive the glowing image of some bright reality,

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* If we take away from *the present* the moment that is just gone by and the moment that is next to come, how much of it will be left for this plain, practical theory to rest upon? Their solid basis of sense and reality will reduce itself to a pin's point, a hair-line, on which our moral balance-masters will have some difficulty to maintain their footing without falling over on either side.

> "The thoughts of which can never from my heart?"

Do I then muse on nothing, do I bend my eyes on nothing, when I turn back in fancy to "those suns and skies so pure" that lighted up my early path? Is it to think of nothing, to set an idle value upon nothing, to think of all that has happened to me, and of all that can ever interest me? Or, to use the language of a fine poet (who is himself among my earliest and not least painful recollections)—

> "What though the radiance which was once so bright
> Be now for ever vanish'd from my sight.
> Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower"—

yet am I mocked with a lie, when I venture to think of it? Or do I not drink in and breathe again the air of heavenly truth, when I but "retrace its footsteps, and its skirts far off adore?" I cannot say with the same poet—

> "And see how dark the backward stream,
> A little moment past so smiling"—

for it is the past that gives me most delight and most assurance of reality. What to me constitutes the great charm of the Confessions of Rousseau is their turning so much upon this feeling. He seems to gather up the past moments of his being like drops of honey-dew to distil a precious liquor from them; his alternate pleasures and pains are the bead-roll that he tells over, and piously worships; he makes a rosary of the flowers of hope and fancy that strewed his earliest years. When he begins the last of the Reveries of a Solitary Walker, "*Il y a aujourd'hui, jour des*

Pâques Fleures, cinquante ans depuis que j'ai premier vu Madame Warens," what a yearning of the soul is implied in that short sentence! Was all that had happened to him, all that he had thought and felt in that sad interval of time, to be accounted nothing? Was that long, dim, faded retrospect of years happy or miserable, a blank that was not to make his eyes fail and his heart faint within him in trying to grasp all that had once vanished, because it was not a prospect into futurity? Was he wrong in finding more to interest him in it than in the next fifty years—which he did not live to see; or if he had, what then? Would they have been worth thinking of, compared with the times of his youth, of his first meeting with Madame Warens, with those times which he has traced with such truth and pure delight "in our heart's tables?" When "all the life of life was flown," was he not to live the first and best part of it over again, and once more be all that he then was?—Ye woods that crown the clear lone brow of Norman-Court, why do I revisit ye so oft, and feel a soothing consciousness of your presence, but that your high tops waving in the wind recall to me the hours and years that are forever fled, that ye renew in ceaseless murmurs the story of long-cherished hopes and bitter disappointment, that in your solitudes and tangled wilds I can wander and lose myself, as I wander on and am lost in the solitude of my own heart; and that as your rustling branches give the loud blast to the waste below—borne on the thoughts of other years, I can look down with patient anguish at the cheerless desolation which I feel within! Without that face pale as the primrose with hyacinthine locks, forever shunning and forever haunting me, mocking my waking thoughts as in a dream, without that smile which my heart could never turn to scorn, without those eyes dark with their own lustre, still bent on mine, and drawing the soul into their liquid mazes like a sea of love, without that name trembling in fancy's ear, without that form gliding before me like Oread or Dryad in fabled groves, what should I do, how pass the listless, leaden-footed hours? Then wave, wave on, ye woods of Tuderley, and lift your high tops in the air; my sighs and vows uttered by your mystic voice breathe into me my former being, and enable me to bear the thing I am!—The objects that we have known in better days are the main props that sustain the weight of our affections, and give us strength to await our future lot. The future is like a dead wall or a thick mist hiding all objects from our view: the past is alive and stirring with objects, bright or solemn, and of unfading interest. What is it in fact that we recur to oftenest? What subjects do we think or talk of? Not the ignorant future, but the well-stored past. Othello, the Moor of Venice, amused himself and his hearers at the house of Signor Brabantio by "running through the story of his life even from his boyish days;" and oft "beguiled them of their tears, when he did speak of some disastrous stroke which his youth suffered." This plan of ingratiating himself would not have answered, if the past had been, like the contents of an old almanac, of no use but to be thrown aside and forgotten. What a blank, for instance, does the history of the world for the next six thousand years present to the mind, compared with that of the last! All that strikes the imagination or excites any interest in the mighty scene is *what has been!*[*]

Neither in itself then, nor as a subject of general contemplation, has the future any advantage over the past. But with respect to our grosser passions and pursuits it has. As far as regards the appeal to the understanding or the imagination, the past is just as good, as real, of as much intrinsic and ostensible value as the future: but there is another principle in the human mind, the principle of action or will; and of this the past has no hold, the future engrosses it entirely to itself. It is this strong lever of the affections that gives so powerful a bias to our sentiments on this subject, and violently transposes the natural order of our associations. We regret the pleasures we have lost, and eagerly anticipate those which are to come: we dwell with satisfaction on the evils from which we have escaped (*Posthæc memi-*

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[*] A treatise on the Millennium is dull; but who was ever weary of reading the fables of the Golden Age? On my once observing I should like to have been Claude, a person said, "he should not, for that then it would by this time have been all over with him." As if it could possibly signify when we live (saving and excepting the present minute), or as if the value of human life decreased or increased with successive centuries. At that rate, we had better have our life still to come at some future period, and so postpone our existence century after century *ad infinitum.*

esse juvabit)—and dread future pain. The good that is past is in this sense like money that is spent, which is of no further use, and about which we give ourselves little concern. The good we expect is like a store yet untouched, and in the enjoyment of which we promise ourselves infinite gratification. What has happened to us we think of no consequence: what is to happen to us, of the greatest. Why so? Simply because the one is still in our power, and the other not—because the efforts of the will to bring any object to pass or to prevent it strengthen our attachment or aversion to that object—because the pains and attention bestowed upon any thing add to our interest in it, and because the habitual and earnest pursuit of any end redoubles the ardour of our expectations, and converts the speculative and indolent satisfaction we might otherwise feel in it into real passion. Our regrets, anxiety, and wishes are thrown away upon the past; but the insisting on the importance of the future is of the utmost use in aiding our resolutions, and stimulating our exertions. If the future were no more amenable to our wills than the past; if our precautions, our sanguine schemes, our hopes and fears, were of as little avail in the one case as in the other; if we could neither soften our minds to pleasure, nor steel our fortitude to the resistance of pain beforehand; if all objects drifted along by us like straws or pieces of wood in a river, the will being purely passive, and as little able to obviate the future as to arrest the past, we should in that case be equally indifferent to both; that is, we should consider each as it affected the thoughts and imagination with certain sentiments of approbation or regret, but without the importunity of desire, the irritation of the will, throwing the whole weight of passion and prejudice into one scale, and leaving the other quite empty. While the blow is coming, we prepare to meet it, we think to ward off or break its force, we arm ourselves with patience to endure what cannot be avoided, we agitate ourselves with fifty needless alarms about it; but when the blow is once struck, the pang is over, the struggle is no longer necessary, and we cease to harass or torment ourselves about it more than we can help. It is not that the one belongs to the future, and the other to time past; but that the one is a subject of action, of uneasy apprehension, of strong passion, and that the other has passed wholly out of the sphere of action into the region of reflection—

"Calm pleasures there abide, majestic pains." *

It would not give a man more concern to know that he should be put to the rack a year hence, than to recollect that he had been put to it a year ago, but that he hopes to avoid the one, whereas he must sit down patiently under the consciousness of the other. In this hope he wears himself out in vain struggles with fate, and puts himself to the rack of his imagination every day he has to live in the mean while. When the event is so remote or so independent of the will as to set aside the necessity of immediate action, or to baffle all attempts to defeat it, it gives us little more disturbance or emotion than if it had already taken place, or were something to happen in another state of being, or to an indifferent person. Criminals are observed to grow more anxious as their trial approaches; but after the sentence is passed, they become tolerably resigned, and generally sleep sound the night before its execution.

It in some measure confirms this theory, that men attach more or less importance to past and future events, according as they are more or less engaged in action and the busy scenes of life. Those who have a fortune to make or are in pursuit of rank and power think little of the past, for it does not contribute greatly to their views: those who have nothing to do but to think, take nearly the same interest in the past as in the future. The contemplation of the one is as delightful and real as that of the other. The season of hope has an end; but the remembrance of it is left. The past still lives in the memory of those who have leisure to look back upon the way that they have trod, and can from it "catch glimpses that may make them less forlorn." The turbulence of action, and uneasiness of desire, must point to the future: it is only in the quiet innocence of shepherds, in the sim-

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* In like manner, though we know that an event must have taken place at a distance, long before we can hear the result, yet as long as we remain in ignorance of it, we irritate ourselves about it, and suffer all the agonies of suspense, as if it were still to come; but as soon as our uncertainty is removed, our fretful impatience vanishes, we resign ourselves to fate, and make up our minds to what has happened as well as we can.

plicity of pastoral ages, that a tomb was found with this inscription—"I ALSO WAS AN ARCADIAN!"

Though I by no means think that our habitual attachment to life is in exact proportion to the value of the gift, yet I am not one of those splenetic persons who affect to think it of no value at all. *Que peu de chose est la vie humaine*—is an exclamation in the mouths of satirists and philosophers, to which I cannot agree. It is little, it is short, it is not worth having, if we take the last hour, and leave out all that has gone before, which has been one way of looking at the subject. Such calculators seem to say that life is nothing when it is over, and that may in their sense be true. If the old rule—*Respice finem*—were to be made absolute, and no one could be pronounced fortunate till the day of his death, there are few among us whose existence would, upon these conditions, be much to be envied. But this is not a fair view of the case. A man's life is his whole life, not the last glimmering snuff of the candle; and this, I say, is considerable, and not *a little matter*, whether we regard its pleasures or its pains. To draw a peevish conclusion to the contrary from our own superannuated desires or forgetful indifference is about as reasonable as to say, a man never was young because he is grown old, or never lived because he is now dead. The length or agreeableness of a journey does not depend on the few last steps of it; nor is the size of a building to be judged of from the last stone that is added to it. It is neither the first nor last hour of our existence, but the space that parts these two—not our exit nor our entrance upon the stage, but what we do, feel, and think while there,—that we are to attend to in pronouncing sentence upon it. Indeed, it would be easy to show that it is the very extent of human life, the infinite number of things contained in it, its contradictory and fluctuating interests, the transition from one situation to another, the hours, months, years, spent in one fond pursuit after another; that it is, in a word, the length of our common journey with the quantity of events crowded into it, that, baffling the grasp of our actual perception, makes it slide from our memory, and dwindle into nothing in its own perspective. It is too mighty for us, and we say it is nothing! It is a speck in our fancy, and yet what canvas would be big enough to hold its striking groups, its endless subjects! It is light as vanity, and yet if all its weary moments, if all its head and heart aches were compressed into one, what fortitude would not be overwhelmed with the blow! What a huge heap, a "huge, dumb heap," of wishes, thoughts, feelings, anxious cares, soothing hopes, loves, joys, friendships, is it composed of! How many ideas and trains of sentiment, long and deep and intense, often pass through the mind in only one day's thinking or reading, for instance! How many such days are there in a year, how many years in a long life, still occupied with something interesting, still recalling some old impression, still recurring to some difficult question and making progress in it, every step accompanied with a sense of power, and every moment conscious of "the high endeavour or the glad success;" for the mind fixes chiefly on that which keeps it employed, and is wound up to a certain pitch of pleasurable excitement or lively solicitude, by the necessity of its own nature. The division of the map of life into its component parts is beautifully made by King Henry VI.

"O God! methinks it were a happy life
To be no better than a homely swain,
To sit upon a hill as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run;
How many make the hour full complete,
How many hours bring about the day,
How many days will finish up the year,
How many years a mortal man may live:
When this is known, then to divide the time;
So many hours must I tend my flock,
So many hours must I take my rest,
So many hours must I contemplate,
So many hours must I sport myself;
So many days my ewes have been with young,
So many weeks ere the poor fools will yean,
So many months ere I shall shear the fleece:
So many minutes, hours, weeks, months, and years
Past over to the end they were created,
Would bring grey hairs unto a quiet grave."

I myself am neither a king nor a shepherd: books have been my fleecy charge, and my thoughts have been my subjects. But these have found me sufficient employment at the time, and enough to muse on for the time to come.—

The passions intercept and warp the natural progress of life. They paralyse all of it that is not devoted to their tyranny and caprice. This makes the difference between the laughing innocence of childhood, the pleasantness of youth, and the crabbedness of age. A load of cares lies like a weight of guilt upon the mind: so that a man of business often has all the air, the distraction and restlessness and hurry of feeling of a criminal. A knowledge of the world takes away the freedom and simplicity of thought as effectually as the contagion of its example. The artlessness and candour of our early years are open to all impressions alike, because the mind is not clogged and pre-occupied with other objects. Our pleasures and our pains come single, make room for one another, and the spring of the mind is fresh and unbroken, its aspect clear and unsullied. Hence "the tear forgot as soon as shed, the sunshine of the breast." But as we advance farther, the will gets greater head. We form violent antipathies and indulge exclusive preferences. We make up our minds to some one thing, and if we cannot have that, will have nothing. We are wedded to opinion, to fancy, to prejudice; which destroys the soundness of our judgments, and the serenity and buoyancy of our feelings. The chain of habit coils itself round the heart, like a serpent, to gnaw and stifle it. It grows rigid and callous; and for the softness and elasticity of childhood, full of proud flesh and obstinate tumours. The violence and perversity of our passions comes in more and more to overlay our natural sensibility and well-grounded affections; and we screw ourselves up to aim only at those things which are neither desirable nor practicable. Thus life passes away in the feverish irritation of pursuit and the certainty of disappointment. By degrees, nothing but this morbid state of feeling satisfies us; and all common pleasures and cheap amusements are sacrificed to the demon of ambition, avarice, or dissipation. The machine is overwrought: the parching heat of the veins dries up and withers the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy; and any pause, any release from the rack of ecstasy on which we are stretched, seems more insupportable than the pangs which we endure. We are suspended between tormenting desires and the horrors of *ennui*. The impulse of the will, like the wheels of a carriage going down hill, becomes too strong for the driver Reason, and cannot be stopped nor kept within bounds. Some idea, some fancy, takes possession of the brain; and however ridiculous, however distressing, however ruinous, haunts us by a sort of fascination through life.

Not only is the principle here pointed out to be seen at work in our more turbulent passions and pursuits; but even in the formal study of arts and sciences the same thing takes place, and undermines the repose and happiness of life. The eagerness of pursuit overcomes the satisfaction to result from the accomplishment. The mind is overstrained to attain its purpose; and when it is attained, the ease and alacrity necessary to enjoy it are gone. The irritation of action does not cease and go down with the occasion for it; but we are first uneasy to get to the end of our work, and then uneasy for want of something to do. The ferment of the brain does not of itself subside into pleasure and soft repose. Hence the disposition to strong *stimuli* observable in persons of much intellectual exertion, to allay and carry off the over-excitement. The *improvisatori* poets (it is recorded by Spence in his Anecdotes of Pope) cannot sleep after an evening's continued display of their singular and difficult art. The rhymes keep running in their heads in spite of themselves, and will not let them rest. Mechanics and labouring people never know what to do with themselves on a Sunday; though they return to their work with greater spirit for the relief, and look forward to it with pleasure all the week. Sir Joshua Reynolds was never comfortable out of his painting-room, and died of chagrin and regret, because he could not paint on to the last moment of his life. He used to say that he could go on retouching a picture forever, as long as it stood on his easel; but as soon as it was once fairly out of the house, he never wished to see it again. An ingenious artist of our own time has been heard to declare, that if ever the Devil got him into his clutches, he would set him to copy his own pictures. Thus the secure, self-complacent retrospect to what is done is nothing; while the anxious, uneasy looking forward to what is to come is every thing. We are afraid to dwell upon the past, lest it should retard our future progress; the indulgence of ease is fatal to excellence; and to succeed in life, we lose the ends of being!

ESSAY IV.

On People with one Idea.

There are people who have but one idea: at least, if they have more, they keep it a secret, for they never talk but of one subject.

There is Major Cartwright*: he has but one idea or subject of discourse, Parliamentary Reform. Now Parliamentary Reform is (as far as I know) a very good thing, a very good idea, and a very good subject to talk about: but why should it be the only one? To hear the worthy and gallant Major resume his favourite topic, is like law-business, or a person who has a suit in Chancery depending. Nothing can be attended to, nothing can be talked of but that. Now it is getting on, now again it is standing still; at one time the Master has promised to pass judgment by a certain day, at another he has put it off again and called for more papers, and both are equally reasons for speaking of it. Like the piece of packthread in the barrister's hands, he turns and twists it all ways, and cannot proceed a step without it. Some school-boys cannot read, unless it be in their own book: and the man of one idea cannot converse out of his own subject. Conversation it is not; but a sort of recital of the preamble of a bill, or a collection of grave arguments for a man's being of opinion with himself. It would be well if there was any thing of character, of eccentricity in all this; but that is not the case. It is a political homily personified, a walking common-place we have to encounter and listen to. It is just as if a man was to insist on your hearing him go through the fifth chapter of the Book of Judges every time you meet, or like the story of the Cosmogony in the Vicar of Wakefield. It is a tune played on a barrel-organ. It is a common vehicle of discourse into which such persons get and are set down when they please, without any pains or trouble to themselves. Neither is it professional pedantry or trading quackery: it has no excuse. The man has no more to do with the question which he saddles on all his hearers than you have. This is what makes the matter hopeless. If a farmer talks to you about his pigs or his poultry, or a physician about his patients, or a lawyer about his briefs, or a merchant about stock, or an author about himself, you know how to account for this; it is a common infirmity: you have a laugh at his expense, and there is no more to be said. But here is a man who goes out of his way to be absurd, and is troublesome by a romantic effort of generosity. You cannot say to him, "All this may be interesting to you, but I have no concern in it:" you cannot put him off in that way. He retorts the Latin adage upon you—*Nihil humani a me alienum puto.* He has got possession of a subject which is of universal and paramount interest (not "a fee-grief, due to some single breast")—and on that plea may hold you by the button as long as he chooses. His delight is to harangue on what nowise regards himself: how then can you refuse to listen to what as little amuses you? Time and tide wait for no man. The business of the state admits of no delay. The question of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments stands first on the order of the day—takes precedence in its own right of every other question. Any other topic, grave or gay, is looked upon in the light of impertinence, and sent *to Coventry.* Business is an interruption; pleasure a digression from it. It is the question before every company where the Major comes (which immediately resolves itself into a committee of the whole world upon it), is carried on by means of a perpetual virtual adjournment, and it is presumed that no other is to be entertained while this is pending—a presumption which gives its persevering advocate a fair prospect of expatiating on it to his dying day. As Cicero says of study, it follows him into the country, it stays with him at home; it sits with him at breakfast, and goes out with him to dinner. It is like a part of his dress, of the costume of his person, without which he would be at a loss what to do. If he meets you in the street, he accosts you with it as a form of salutation: if you see him at his own house, it is supposed you come upon that. If you happen to remark, "It is a fine day or the town is full," it is considered as a temporary compromise of the question; you are suspected of not going the whole length of the principle. As Sancho, when reprimanded for mentioning his homely favourite in the Duke's kitchen, defended himself by saying—"There I thought of Dapple, and there I spoke of him"—so our true stickler for Reform neglects no opportunity of introducing the subject wherever he is. Place its veteran champion under the frozen north, and he will celebrate sweet smiling Reform: place him under the mid-day Afric sun, and he will talk of nothing but Reform—Reform so sweetly smiling and so sweetly promising for the last forty years— .

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* This most respectable man died lately at a very advanced age.

> Dulce ridentem Lalagen,
> Dulce loquentem!

A topic of this sort, of which the person himself may be considered as almost sole proprietor and patentee, is an estate for life, free from all incumbrance of wit, thought, or study; you may live upon it as a settled income; and others might as well think to eject you out of a capital freehold inheritance as think to drive you out of it into the wide world of common sense and argument. Every man's house is his castle; and every man's common-place is his stronghold, from which he looks out and smiles at the dust and heat of controversy, raised by a number of frivolous and vexatious questions—"Rings the world with the vain stir!" A cure for this and every other evil would be a Parliamentary Reform; and so we return in a perpetual circle to the point from which we set out. Is not this a species of sober madness more provoking than the real? Has not the theoretical enthusiast his mind as much warped, as much enslaved by one idea as the acknowledged lunatic, besides that the former has no lucid intervals? If you see a visionary of this class going along the street, you can tell as well what he is thinking of and will say next, as the man that fancies himself a tea-pot or the Czar of Muscovy. The one is as inaccessible to reason as the other: if the one raves, the other dotes!

There are some who fancy the Corn-Bill the root of all evil, and others who trace all the miseries of life to the practice of muffling children in night-clothes when they sleep or travel. They will declaim by the hour together on the first, and argue themselves black in the face on the last. It is in vain that you give up the point. They persist in the debate, and begin again—"But don't you see—?" These sort of partial obliquities, as they are more entertaining and original, are also by their nature intermittent. They hold a man but for a season. He may have one a year or every two years; and though, while he is in the heat of any new discovery, he will let you hear of nothing else, he varies from himself, and is amusing undesignedly. He is not like the chimes at midnight.

People of the character here spoken of, that is, who tease you to death with some one idea, generally differ in their favorite notion from the rest of the world; and indeed it is the love of distinction which is mostly at the bottom of this peculiarity. Thus one person is remarkable for living on a vegetable diet, and never fails to entertain you all dinner-time with an invective against animal food. One of this self-denying class, who adds to the primitive simplicity of this sort of food the recommendation of having it in a raw state, lamenting the death of a patient whom he had augured to be in a good way as a convert to his system, at last accounted for his disappointment in a whisper—"But she ate meat privately, depend upon it!" It is not pleasant, though it is what one submits to willingly from some people, to be asked every time you meet, whether you have quite left off drinking wine, and to be complimented or condoled with on your looks according as you answer in the affirmative or negative. Abernethy thinks his pill an infallible cure for all disorders. A person once complaining to his physician that he thought his mode of treatment had not answered, he assured him it was the best in the world,—"and as a proof of it," says he, "I have had one gentleman, a patient with your disorder, under the same regimen for the last sixteen years!" —I have known persons whose minds were entirely taken up at all times and on all occasions with such questions as the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, the Restoration of the Jews, or the progress of Unitarianism. I myself at one period took a pretty strong turn to inveighing against the doctrine of Divine Right, and am not yet cured of my prejudice on that subject. How many projectors have gone mad in good earnest from incessantly harping on one idea, the discovery of the philosopher's stone, the finding out the longitude, or paying off the national debt! The disorder at length comes to a fatal crisis; but long before this, and while they were walking about and talking as usual, the derangement of the fancy, the loss of all voluntary power to control or alienate their ideas from the single subject that occupied them, was gradually taking place, and overturning the fabric of the understanding by wrenching it on one side. Alderman Wood has, I should suppose, talked of nothing but the Queen in all companies for the last six months. Happy Alderman Wood! Some persons have got a definition of the verb, others a system of shorthand, others a cure for typhus fever, others a method for preventing the counterfeiting of bank-notes, which they think the best possible, and indeed the only one. Others insist there have been only three great men in the world, leaving you to add a fourth. A man who has been in Germany will sometimes talk of nothing but what is German: a Scotchman always leads the discourse to his own country. Some descant on the Kantean philosophy. There is a conceited fellow about town who talks always and every where on this subject. He wears the Categories round his neck like a pearl-chain: he plays off the names of the primary and transcendental qualities, like rings on his fingers. He talks of the Kantean system while he dances; he talks of it while he dines; he talks of it to his children, to his apprentices, to his customers. He called on me to convince me of it, and said I was only prevented from becoming a complete convert by one or two prejudices. He knows no more about it than a pike-staff. Why then does he make so much ridiculous fuss about it? It is not that he has got this one idea in his head, but that he has got no other. A dunce may talk on the subject of the Kantean philosophy with great impunity: if he opened his lips on any other, he might be found out. A French lady, who had married an Englishman who said little, excused him by saying—"He is always thinking of Locke and Newton." This is one way of passing muster by following in the *suite* of great names!—A friend of mine, whom I met one day in the street, accosted me with more than usual vivacity, and said, "Well, we're selling, we're selling!" I thought he meant a house. "No," he said, "haven't you seen the advertisement in the newspapers? I mean five-and-twenty copies of the Essay." This work, a comely, capacious quarto on the most abstruse metaphysics, had occupied his sole thoughts for several years, and he concluded that I must be thinking of what he was. I believe, however, I may say I am nearly the only person that ever read, certainly that ever pretended to understand it. It is an original and most ingenious work, nearly as incomprehensible as it is original, and as quaint as it is ingenious. If the author is taken up with the ideas in his own head and no others, he has a right: for he has ideas there, that are to be met with nowhere else, and which occasionally would not disgrace a Berkeley. A dextrous plagiarist might get himself an immense reputation by putting them in a popular dress. Oh! how little do they know, who have never done any thing but repeat after others by rote, the pangs, the labour, the yearnings and misgivings of mind it costs, to get at the germ of an original idea—to dig it out of the hidden recesses of thought and nature, and bring it half-ashamed, struggling, and deformed, into the day—to give words and intelligible symbols to that which was never imagined or expressed before! It is as if the dumb should speak for the first time, or as if things should stammer out their own meaning, through the imperfect organs of mere sense. I wish that some of our fluent, plausible declaimers, who have such store of words to cover the want of ideas, would lend their art to this writer. If he, "poor, unfledged" in this respect, "who has scarce winged from view o' th' nest," could find a language for his thoughts, truth would find a language for some of her secrets. Mr Fearn was buried in the woods of Indostan. In his leisure from business and from tiger-shooting, he took it into his head to look into his own mind. A whim or two, an odd fancy, like a film before the eye, now and then crossed it: it struck him as something curious, but the impression at first disappeared like breath upon glass. He thought no more of it: yet still the same conscious feelings returned, and what at first was chance or instinct, became a habit. Several notions had taken possession of his brain relating to mental processes which he had never heard alluded to in conversation; but not being well versed in such matters, he did not know whether they were to be found in learned authors or not. He took a journey to the capital of the

Peninsula on purpose, bought Locke, Reid, Stewart, and Berkeley, whom he consulted with eager curiosity when he got home, but did not find what he looked for. He set to work himself; and in a few weeks, sketched out a rough draught of his thoughts and observations on bamboo paper. The eagerness of his new pursuit, together with the diseases of the climate, proved too much for his constitution, and he was forced to return to this country. He put his metaphysics, his bamboo manuscript, into the boat with him, and as he floated down the Ganges, said to himself, "If I live, this will live: if I die, it will not be heard of." What is fame to such a feeling? The babbling of an idiot! He brought the work home with him, and twice had it stereotyped. The first sketch he allowed was obscure, but the improved copy he thought could not fail to strike. It did not succeed. The world, as Goldsmith said of himself, made a point of taking no notice of it. Ever since he has had nothing but disappointment and vexation—the greatest and most heart-breaking of all others—that of not being able to make yourself understood. Mr. Fearn tells me there is a sensible writer in the Monthly Review who sees the thing in its proper light, and says so. But I have heard of no other instance. There are notwithstanding ideas in this work, neglected and ill-treated as it has been, that lead to more curious and subtle speculations on some of the most disputed and difficult points of the philosophy of the human mind (such as *relation*, *abstraction*, &c.) than have been thrown out in any work for the last sixty years, I mean since Hume; for since his time, there has been no metaphysician in this country worth the name. Yet his Treatise on Human Nature, he tells us, "fell still-born from the press." So it is that knowledge works its way, and reputation lingers far behind it. But truth is better than opinion, I maintain it; and as to the two stereotyped and unsold editions of the Essay on Consciousness, I say, *Honi soit qui mal y pense!** My Uncle Toby had one idea in his head, that of his bowling-green, and another, that of the Widow Wadman. Oh, spare them both! I will only add one more anecdote in illustration of this theory of the mind's being occupied with one idea, which is most frequently of a man's self. A celebrated lyrical writer happened to drop into a small party where they had just got the novel of Rob Roy, by the author of Waverley. The motto in the title-page was taken from a poem of his. This was a hint sufficient, a word to the wise. He instantly went to the book-shelf in the next room, took down the volume of his own poems, read the whole of that in question aloud with manifest complacency, replaced it on the shelf, and walked away; taking no more notice of Rob Roy than if there had been no such person, nor of the new novel than if it had not been written by its renowned author. There was no reciprocity in this. But the writer in question does not admit of any merit, second to his own.*

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* Quarto poetry, as well as quarto metaphysics, does not always sell. Going one day into a shop in Paternoster-row to see for some lines in Mr. Wordsworth's Excursion to interlard some prose with, I applied to the constituted authorities, and asked if I could look at a copy of the Excursion? The answer was—"Into which county, Sir?"

Mr. Owen is a man remarkable for one idea. It is that of himself and the Lanark cotton-mills. He carries this idea backwards and forwards with him from Glasgow to London, without allowing any thing for attrition, and expects to find it in the same state of purity and perfection in the latter place as at the former. He acquires a wonderful velocity and impenetrability in his undaunted transit. Resistance to him is vain, while the whirling motion of the mail-coach remains in his head.

"Nor Alps nor Appenines can keep him out,
Nor fortified redoubt."

He even got possession, in the suddenness of his onset, of the steam-engine of the Times newspaper, and struck off ten thousand wood-cuts of the Projected Villages, which afforded an ocular demonstration to all who saw them of the practicability of Mr. Owen's whole scheme. He comes into a room with one of these documents in his hand, with the air of a schoolmaster and a quack-doctor mixed, asks very kindly how you do, and on hearing you are still in an indifferent state of health, owing to bad digestion, instantly turns round, and observes, "That all that will be remedied in his plan: that indeed he thinks too much attention has been paid to the mind, and not enough to the body; that in his system, which he has now perfected and which will shortly be generally adopted, he has provided effectually for both: that he has been long of opinion that the mind depends altogether on the physical organization, and where the latter is neglected or disordered, the former must languish and want its due vigour: that exercise is therefore a part of his system, with full liberty to develop every faculty of mind and body: that two objections had been made to his New View of Society, *viz.* its want of relaxation from labour, and its want of variety; but the first of these, the too great restraint, he trusted he had already answered, for where the powers of mind and body were freely exercised and brought out, surely liberty must be allowed to exist in the highest degree; and as to the second, the monotony which would be produced by a regular and general plan of co-operation, he conceived he had proved in his "New View" and "Addresses to the Higher Classes"; that the co-operation he had recommended was necessarily conducive to the most extensive improvement of the ideas and faculties, and where this was the case, there must be the greatest possible variety, instead of a want of it." And having said so, this expert and sweeping orator takes up his hat and walks down-stairs after reading his lecture of truisms like a play-bill, or an apothecary's advertisement; and should you stop him at the door to say by way of putting in a word in common, that Mr. Southey seems somewhat favourable to his plan in his late "Letter to Mr. William Smith," he looks at you with a smile of pity at the futility of all opposition and the idleness of all encouragement. People who thus swell out some vapid scheme of their own into undue importance, seem to me to labour under water in the head —to exhibit a huge hydrocephalus! They may be very worthy people for all that, but they are bad companions, and very indifferent reasoners. Tom Moore says of some one somewhere, "That he puts his hand in his breeches' pocket like a crocodile." The phrase is hieroglyphical: but Mr. Owen and others might be said to put their foot in the question of social improvement and reform much in the same unaccountable manner.

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* These fantastic poets are like a foolish ringer at Plymouth that Northcote tells the story of. He was proud of his ringing, and the boys who made a jest of his foible used to get him into the belfry, and ask him, "Well now, John, how many good ringers are there in Plymouth?" "Two," he would say, without any hesitation. "Ay, indeed! and who are they?"—"Why, first, there's myself, that's one; and—and "——" Well, and who's the other?" —"Why, there's, there's——Ecod, I can't think of any other but myself." *Talk we of one Master Launcelot.* The story is of ringers: it will do for any vain, shallow, self-satisfied egotist of them all.

I hate to be surfeited with any thing, however sweet. I do not want to be always tied to the same question, as if there were no other in the world. I like a mind more Catholic.

> "I love to talk with mariners,
> That come from a far countree."

I am not for "a collusion" but "an exchange" of ideas. It is well to hear what other people have to say on a number of subjects. I do not wish to be always respiring the same confined atmosphere, but to vary the scene, and get a little relief and fresh air out of doors. Do all we can to shake it off, there is always enough pedantry, egotism, and self-conceit left lurking behind: we need not seal ourselves up hermetically in these precious qualities; so as to think of nothing but our own wonderful discoveries, and hear nothing bnt the sound of our own voice. Scholars, like princes, may learn something by being *incognito*. Yet we see those who cannot go into a bookseller's shop, or bear to be five minutes in a stage-coach, without letting you know who they are. They carry their reputation about with them as the snail does its shell, and sit under its canopy like the lady in the lobster. I cannot understand this at all. What is the use of a man's always revolving round his own little circle? He must, one should think, be tired of it himself, as well as tire other people. A well-known writer says with much boldness both in the thought and expression, that "a Lord is imprisoned in the Bastille of a *name*, and cannot enlarge himself into man:" and I have known men of genius in the same predicament. Why must a man be forever mouthing out his own poetry, comparing himself with Milton, passage by passage, and weighing every line in a balance of posthumous fame which he holds in his own hands? It argues a want of imagination as well as of common sense. Has he no ideas but what he has put into verse; or none in common with his hearers? Why should he think it the only scholar-like thing, the only "virtue extant," to see the merit of his writings, and that "men were brutes without them?" Why should he bear a grudge to all art, to all beauty, to all wisdom that does not spring from his own brain? Or why should he fondly imagine that there is but one fine thing in the world, namely poetry, and that he is the only poet in it? It will never do. Poetry is a very fine thing; but there are other things besides it. Every thing must have its turn. Does a wise man think to enlarge his comprehension by turning his eyes only on himself, or hope to conciliate the admiration of others by scouting, proscribing, and loathing all that they delight in? He must either have a disproportionate idea of himself; or be ignorant of the world, in which he lives. It is quite enough to have one class of people born to think the universe made for them!—It seems also to argue a want of repose, of confidence, and firm faith in a man's real pretensions, to be always dragging them forward into the fore-ground, as if the proverb held here—*Out of sight out of mind.* Does the author in question conceive that no one would ever think of his poetry, unless he forced it upon them by repeating it himself? Does he believe all competition, all allowance of another's merit, fatal to him? Must he, like Moody in the Country Girl, lock up the faculties of his admirers in ignorance of all other fine things, painting, music, the antique, lest they should play truant to him? Methinks, such a proceeding implies no good opinion of his own genius or their taste:—it is deficient in dignity and in decorum. Surely if any one is convinced of the reality of an acquisition, he can bear not to have it spoken of every minute. If he knows he has an undoubted superiority in any respect, he will not be uneasy because every one he meets is not in the secret, nor be staggered by the report of rival excellence. One of the first mathematicians and classical scholars of the day was mentioning it as a compliment to himself, that a cousin of his, a girl from school, had said of him, "You know M——— is a very plain good sort of young man, but he is not any thing at all out of the common." L. H. once said to me, "I wonder I never heard you speak upon this subject before, which you seem to have studied a good deal." I answered, "Why, we were not reduced to that, that I know of!"—

There are persons, who, without being chargeable with the vice here spoken of, yet "stand accountant for as great a sin:" though not dull and monotonous, they are vivacious mannerists in their conversation, and excessive egotists. Though they run over a thousand subjects in mere gaiety of heart, their delight still flows from one idea, namely, themselves. Open the book in what page you will, there is a frontispiece of themselves staring you in the face. They are a sort of *Jacks o' the Green*, with a sprig of laurel, a little tinsel, and a little smut, but still playing antics and keeping in incessant motion, to attract attention and extort your pittance of approbation. Whether they talk of the town or the country, poetry or politics, it comes to much the same thing. If they talk to you of the town, its diversions, "its palaces, its ladies, and its pomp," they are the delight, the grace, and ornament of it. If they are describing the charms of the country, they give no account of any individual spot or object, or source of pleasure, but the circumstance of their being there. "With them conversing, we forget all place, all seasons, and their change." They, perhaps, pluck a leaf or a flower, patronize it, and hand it to you to admire, but select no one feature of beauty or grandeur to dispute the palm of perfection with their own persons. Their rural descriptions are mere landscape back-grounds, with their own portraits in an engaging attitude in front. They are not observing or enjoying the scene, but doing the honours as masters of the ceremonies of nature, and arbiters of elegance to all humanity. If they tell a love-tale of enamoured princesses, it is plain they fancy themselves the hero of the piece. If they discuss poetry, their encomiums still turn on something genial and unsophisticated, meaning their own style: if they enter into politics, it is understood that a hint from them to the potentates of Europe is sufficient. In short, as a lover (talk of what you will) brings in his mistress at every turn, so these persons contrive to divert your attention to the same darling object—they are, in fact, in love with themselves; and like lovers, should be left to keep their own company.

ESSAY V.

On the Ignorance of the Learned.

"For the more languages a man can speak,
His talent has but sprung the greater leak:
And, for the industry he has spent upon't,
Must full as much some other way discount.
The Hebrew, Chaldee, and the Syriac,
Do, like their letters, set men's reason back,
And turn their wits that strive to understand it
(Like those that write the characters) left-handed.
Yet he that is but able to express
No sense at all in several languages,
Will pass for learneder than he that's known
To speak the strongest reason in his own."
THE AUTHOR OF HUDIBRAS.

THE description of persons who have the fewest ideas of all others are mere authors and readers. It is better to be able neither to read nor write than to be able to do nothing else. A lounger who is ordinarily seen with a book in his hand, is (we may be almost sure) equally without the power or inclination to attend either to what passes around him, or in his own mind. Such a one may be said to carry his understanding about with him in his pocket, or to leave it at home on his library shelves. He is afraid of venturing on any train of reasoning, or of striking out any observation that is not mechanically suggested to him by passing his eyes over certain legible characters; shrinks from the fatigue of thought, which, for want of practice, becomes insupportable to him; and sits down contented with an endless wearisome succession of words and half-formed images, which fill the void of the mind, and continually efface one another. Learning is, in too many cases, but a foil to common sense; a substitute for true knowledge. Books are less often made use of as "spectacles" to look at nature with, than as blinds to keep out its strong light and shifting scenery from weak eyes and indolent dispositions. The book-worm wraps himself up in his web of verbal generalities, and sees only the glimmering shadows of things reflected from the minds of others. Nature *puts him out.* The impressions of real objects, stripped of the disguises of words and voluminous round-about descriptions, are blows that stagger him; their variety distracts, their rapidity exhausts him; and he turns from the bustle, the noise and glare and whirling motion of the world about him (which he has not an eye to follow in its fantastic changes, nor an understanding to reduce to fixed principles) to the quiet monotony of the dead languages, and the less startling and more intelligible combinations of the letters of the alphabet. It is well, it is perfectly well. "Leave me to my repose" is the motto of the sleeping and the dead. You might as well ask the paralytic to leap from his chair and throw away his crutch, or, without a miracle, to "take up his bed and walk," as expect the learned reader to lay down his book and think for himself. He clings to it for his intellectual support; and his dread of being left to himself is like the horror of a vacuum. He can only breathe a learned atmosphere, as other men breathe common air. He is a borrower of sense. He has no ideas of his own, and must live on those of other people. The habit of supplying our ideas from foreign sources "enfeebles all internal strength of thought," as a course of dram-drinking destroys the tone of the stomach. The faculties of the mind, when not exerted, or when cramped by custom and authority, become listless, torpid, and unfit for the purposes of thought or action. Can we wonder at the languor and lassitude which is thus produced by a life of learned sloth and ignorance; by poring over lines and syllables that excite little more idea or interest than if they were the characters of an unknown tongue, till the eye closes on vacancy, and the book drops from the feeble hand! I would rather be a wood-cutter, or the meanest hind, that all day "sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and at night sleeps in Elysium," than wear out my life so, 'twixt dreaming and awake. The learned author differs from the learned student in this, that the one transcribes what the other reads. The learned are mere literary drudges. If you set them upon original composition, their heads turn, they know not where they are. The indefatigable readers of books are like the everlasting copiers of pictures. who, when they attempt to do any thing of their own, find they want an eye quick enough, a hand steady enough, and colours bright enough, to trace the living forms of nature.

Any one who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education, and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape. It is an old remark, that boys who shine at school do not make the greatest figure when they grow up and come out into the world. The things, in fact, which a boy is set to learn at school, and on which his success depends, are things which do not require the exercise either of the highest or the most useful faculties of the mind. Memory (and that of the lowest kind) is the chief faculty called into play, in conning over and repeating lessons by rote in grammar, in languages, in geography, arithmetic, &c., so that he who has the most of this technical memory, with the least turn for other things, which have a stronger and more natural claim upon his childish attention, will make the most forward school-boy. The jargon containing the definitions of the parts of speech, the rules for casting up an account, or the inflections of a Greek verb, can have no attraction to the tyro of ten years old, except as they are imposed as a task upon him by others, or from his feeling the want of sufficient relish or amusement in other things. A lad with a sickly constitution, and no very active mind, who can just retain what is pointed out to him, and has neither sagacity to distinguish nor spirit to enjoy for himself, will generally be at the head of his form. An idler at school, on the other hand, is one who has high health and spirits, who has the free use of his limbs, with all his wits about him, who feels the circulation of his blood and the motion of his heart, who is ready to laugh and cry in a breath, and who had rather chase a ball or a butterfly, feel the open air in his face, look at the fields or the sky, follow a winding path, or enter with eagerness into all the little conflicts and interests of his acquaintances and friends, than doze over a musty spelling-book, repeat barbarous distichs after his master, sit so many hours pinioned to a writing-desk, and receive his reward for the loss of time and pleasure in paltry prize-medals at Christmas and Midsummer. There is indeed a degree of stupidity which prevents children from learning the usual lessons, or ever arriving at these puny academic honours. But what passes for stupidity is much oftener a want of interest, of a sufficient motive to fix the attention, and force a reluctant application to the dry and unmeaning pursuits of school-learning. The best capacities are as much above this drudgery, as the dullest are beneath it. Our men of the greatest genius have not been most distinguished for their acquirements at school or at the university.

"Th' enthusiast Fancy was a truant ever."

Gray and Collins were among the instances of this wayward disposition. Such persons do not think so highly of the advantages, nor can they submit their imaginations so servilely to the trammels of strict scholastic discipline. There is a certain kind and degree of intellect in which words take root, but into which things have not power to penetrate. A mediocrity of talent, with a certain slenderness of moral constitution, is the soil that produces the most brilliant specimens of successful prize-essayists and Greek epigrammatists. It should not be forgotten, that the most equivocal character among modern politicians was the cleverest boy at Eton.

Learning is the knowledge of that which is not generally known to others, and which we can only derive at second-hand from books or other artificial sources. The knowledge of that which is before us or about us, which appeals to our experience, passions, and pursuits, to the bosoms and businesses of men, is not learning. Learning is the knowledge of that which none but the learned know. He is the most learned man who knows the most of what is farthest removed from common life and actual observation, that is of the least practical utility, and least liable to be brought to the test of experience, and that, having been handed down through the greatest number of intermediate stages, is the most full of uncertainty, difficulties, and contradictions. It is seeing with the eyes of others, hearing with their ears, and pinning our faith on their understandings. The learned man prides himself in the knowledge of names and dates, not of men or things. He thinks and cares nothing about his next-door neighbours, but he is deeply read in the tribes and casts of the Hindoos and Calmuc Tartars. He can hardly find his way into the next street, though he is acquainted with the exact dimensions of Constantinople and Pekin. He does not know whether his oldest acquaintance is a knave or a fool, but he can pronounce a pompous lecture on all the principal characters in history. He cannot tell whether an object is black or white, round or square, and yet he is a professed master of the laws of optics and the rules of perspective. He knows as much of what he talks about, as a blind man does of colours. He cannot give a satisfactory answer to the plainest question, nor is he ever in the right in any one of his opinions, upon any one matter of fact that really comes before him, and yet he gives himself out for an infallible judge on all those points of which it is impossible that he or any other person living should know anything but by conjecture. He is expert in all the dead and in most of the living languages; but he can neither speak his own fluently, nor write it correctly. A person of this class, the second Greek scholar of his day, undertook to point out several solecisms in Milton's Latin style; and in his own performance there is hardly a sentence of common English. Such was Dr. ——. Such is Dr. ——. Such was not Porson. He was an exception that confirmed the general rule,—a man that, by uniting talents and knowledge with learning, made the distinction between them more striking and palpable.

A mere scholar, who knows nothing but books, must be ignorant even of them. "Books do not teach the use of books." How should he know anything of a work, who knows nothing of the subject of it? The learned pedant is conversant with books only as they are made of other books, and those again of others, without end. He parrots those who have parroted others. He can translate the same word into ten different languages, but he knows nothing of the *thing* which it means in any one of them. He stuffs his head with authorities built on authorities, with quotations quoted from quotations, while he locks up his senses, his understanding, and his heart. He is unacquainted with the maxims and manners of the world; he is to seek in the characters of individuals. He sees no beauty in the face of nature or of art. To him "the mighty world of eye and ear" is hid; and "knowledge," except at one entrance, "quite shut out." His pride takes part with his ignorance; and his self-importance rises with the number of things of which he does not know the value, and which he therefore despises as unworthy of his notice. He knows nothing of pictures;—"of the colouring of Titian, the grace of Raphael, the purity of Domenichino, the *corregiescity* of Correggio, the learning of Poussin, the airs of Guido, the taste of the Caracci, or the grand contour of Michael Angelo,"—of all those glories of the Italian and miracles of the Flemish school, which have filled the eyes of mankind with delight, and to the study and imitation of which thousands have in vain devoted their lives. These are to him as if they had never been, a mere dead letter, a by-word; and no wonder: for he neither sees nor understands their prototypes in nature. A print of Rubens's *Watering-place*, or Claude's *Enchanted Castle*, may be hanging on the walls of his room for months without his once perceiving them; and if you point them out to him, he will turn away from them. The language of nature or of art (which is another nature) is one that he does not understand. He repeats indeed the names of Apelles and Phidias, because they are to be found in classic authors, and boasts of their works as prodigies, because they no longer exist; or when he sees the finest remains of Grecian art actually before him in the Elgin marbles, takes no other interest in them than as they lead to a learned dispute, and (which is the same thing) a quarrel about the meaning of a Greek particle. He is equally ignorant of music; he "knows no touch of it," from the strains of the all-accomplished Mozart to the shepherd's pipe upon the mountain. His ears are nailed to his books; and deadened with the sound of the Greek and Latin tongues, and the din and smithery of school-learning. Does he know anything more of poetry? He knows the number of feet in a verse, and of acts in a play; but of the soul or spirit he knows nothing. He can turn a Greek ode into English, or a Latin epigram into Greek verse, but whether either is worth the trouble, he leaves to the critics. Does he understand "the act and practique part of life" better than "the theorique?" No. He knows no liberal or mechanic art; no trade or occupation; no game of skill or chance. Learning "has no skill in surgery," in agriculture, in building, in working in wood or in iron; it cannot make any instrument of labour, or use it when made; it cannot handle the plough or the spade, or the chisel or the hammer; it knows nothing of hunting or hawking, fishing or shooting, of horses or dogs, of fencing or dancing, or cudgel-playing, or bowls, or cards, or tennis, or anything else. The learned professor of all arts and sciences cannot reduce any one of them to practice, though he may contribute an account of them to an Encyclopædia. He has not the use of his hands or of his feet; he can neither run, nor walk, nor swim; and he considers all those who actually understand and can exercise any of these arts of body or mind, as vulgar and mechanical men;—though to know almost any one of them in perfection requires long time and practice, with powers originally fitted, and a turn of mind particularly devoted to them. It does not require more than this to enable the learned candidate to arrive, by painful study, at a Doctor's degree and a fellowship, and to eat, drink, and sleep the rest of his life!

The thing is plain. All that men really understand, is confined to a very small compass; to their daily affairs and experience; to what they have an opportunity to know, and motives to study or practise. The rest is affectation and imposture. The common people have the use of their limbs; for they live by their labour or skill. They understand their own business, and the characters of those they have to deal with; for it is necessary that they should. They have eloquence to express their passions, and wit at will to express their contempt and provoke laughter. Their natural use of speech is not hung up in monumental mockery, in an obsolete language; nor is their sense of what is ludicrous, or readiness at finding out allusions to express it, buried in collections of *Anas*. You will hear more good things on the outside of a stage-coach from London to Oxford, than if you were to pass a twelvemonth with the Undergraduates or Heads of Colleges of that famous university; and more *home* truths are to be learnt from listening to a noisy debate in an ale-house, than from attending to a formal one in the House of Commons. An elderly country gentlewoman will often know more of character, and be able to illustrate it by more amusing anecdotes taken from the history of what has been said, done, and gossiped in a country town for the last fifty years, than the best blue-stocking of the age will be able to glean from that sort of learning which consists in an acquaintance with all the novels and satirical poems published in the same period. People in towns, indeed, are woefully deficient in a knowledge of character, which they see only *in the bust*, not as a whole-length. People in the country not only know all that has happened to a man, but trace his virtues or vices, as they do his features, in their descent through several generations, and solve some contradiction in his behaviour by a cross in the breed, half a century ago. The learned know nothing of the matter, either in town or country. Above all, the mass of society have common sense, which the learned in all ages want. The vulgar are in the right when they judge for themselves; they are wrong when they trust to their blind guides. The celebrated non-conformist divine, Baxter, was almost stoned to death by the good women of Kidderminster, for asserting from the pulpit that "hell was paved with infants' skulls;" but by the force of argument, and of learned quotations from the Fathers, the reverend preacher at length prevailed over the scruples of his congregation, and over reason and humanity.

Such is the use which has been made of human learning. The labourers in this vineyard seem as if it was their object to confound all common sense, and the distinctions of good and evil, by means of traditional maxims and preconceived notions, taken upon trust, and increasing in absurdity with increase of age. They pile hypothesis on hypothesis, mountain-high, till it is impossible to come at the plain truth on any question. They see things, not as they are, but as they find them in books; and "wink and shut their apprehensions up," in order that they may discover nothing to interfere with their prejudices, or convince them of their absurdity. It might be supposed, that the height of human wisdom consisted in maintaining contradictions, and rendering nonsense sacred. There is no dogma, however fierce or foolish, to which these persons have not set their seals, and tried to impose on the understandings of their followers, as the will of Heaven clothed with all the terrors and sanctions of religion. How little has the human understanding been directed to find out the true and useful! How much ingenuity has been thrown away in the defence of creeds and systems! How much time and talents have been wasted in theological controversy, in law, in politics, in verbal criticism, in judicial astrology, and in finding out the art of making gold! What actual benefit do we reap from the writings of a Laud or a Whitgift, or of Bishop Bull or Bishop Waterland, or Prideaux' Connections, or Beausobre, or Calmet, or St. Augustine, or Puffendorf, or Vattel, or from the more literal but equally learned and unprofitable labours of Scaliger, Cardan, and Scioppius? How many grains of sense are there in their thousand folio or quarto volumes? What would the world lose, if they were committed to the flames to-morrow? Or are they not already "gone to the vault of all the Capulets?" Yet all these were oracles in their time, and would have scoffed at you or me, at common sense and human nature, for differing with them. It is our turn to laugh now.

To conclude this subject. The most sensible people to be met with in society are men of business and of the world, who argue from what they see and know, instead of spinning cobweb distinctions of what things ought to be. Women have often more of what is called *good sense* than men. They have fewer pretensions; are less implicated in theories; and judge of objects more from their immediate and involuntary impression on the mind, and, therefore, more truly and naturally. They cannot reason wrong; for they do not reason at all. They do not think or speak by rule; and they have in general more eloquence and wit, as well as sense, on that account. By their wit, sense, and eloquence together, they generally contrive to govern their husbands. Their style, when they write to their friends, (not for the booksellers,) is better than that of most authors. Uneducated people have most exuberance of invention, and the greatest freedom from prejudice. Shakespear's was evidently an uneducated mind, both in the freshness of his imagination, and in the variety of his views; as Milton's was scholastic, in the texture both of his thoughts and feelings. Shakespear had not been accustomed to write themes at school in favour of virtue or against vice. To this we owe the unaffected, but healthy tone of his dramatic morality. If we wish to know the force of human genius, we should read Shakespear. If we wish to see the insignificance of human learning, we may study his commentators.

ESSAY VI.

On Will-Making.

Few things show the human character in a more ridiculous light than the circumstance of will-making. It is the latest opportunity we have of exercising the natural perversity of the disposition, and we take care to make a good use of it. We husband it with jealousy; put it off as long as we can; and then employ every precaution that the world shall be no gainer by our deaths. This last act of our lives seldom belies the former tenor of them, for stupidity, caprice, and unmeaning spite. All that we seem to think of is to manage matters so (in settling accounts with those who are unmannerly enough to survive us) as to do as little good, and to plague and disappoint as many people as possible.

Some persons have a superstition on the subject of making their last will and testament, and think that when every thing is ready signed and sealed, there is nothing further left to delay their departure. I have heard of an instance of one person who, having a feeling of this kind on his mind, and being teazed into making his will by those about him, actually fell ill with pure apprehension, and thought he was going to die in good earnest, but having executed the deed over-night, awoke, to his great surprise, the next morning, and found himself as well as ever he was.* An elderly gentleman possessed of a good estate and the same idle notion, and who found himself in a dangerous way, was anxious to do this piece of justice to those who remained behind him, but when it came to the point, his heart failed him, and his nervous fancies returned in full force:—even on his death-bed, he still held back and was averse to sign what he looked upon as his own death-warrant, and just at the last gasp, amidst the anxious looks and silent upbraidings of friends and relatives that surrounded him, he summoned resolution to hold out his feeble hand, which was guided by others to trace his name and he fell back—a corpse! If there is any pressing reason for it, that is, if any particular person would be relieved from a state of harassing uncertainty, or materially benefitted by their making a will, the old and infirm (who do not like to be put out of their way) generally make this an excuse to themselves for putting it off to the very last moment, probably till it is too late: or where this is sure to make the greatest number of blank faces, contrive to give their friends the slip, without signifying their final determination in their favour. Where some unfortunate individual has been kept long in suspense, who has been perhaps sought out for that very purpose, and who may be in a great measure dependent on this as a last resource, it is nearly a certainty that there will be no will to be found; no trace, no sign to discover whether the person dying thus intestate ever had any intention of the sort, or why they relinquished it. This is to bespeak the thoughts and imaginations of others for victims after we are dead, as well as their persons and expectations for hangers-on while we are living. A celebrated beauty of the middle of the last century, towards its close sought out a female relative, the friend and companion of her youth, who had lived during the forty years of their separation in rather straitened circumstances, and in a situation which admitted of some alleviations. Twice they met after that long lapse of time—once her relation visited her in the splendour of a rich old family-mansion, and once she crossed the country to become an inmate of the humble dwelling of her early and only remaining friend. What was this for? Was it to revive the image of her youth in the pale and care-worn face of her friend?

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* A poor woman at Plymouth, who did not like the formality, or could not afford the expense of a will, thought to leave what little property she had in wearing-apparel and household moveables to her friends and relations, *vivâ voce*, and before Death stopped her breath. She gave and willed away (of her proper authority) her chair and table to one, her bed to another, an old cloak to a third, a night-cap and petticoat to a fourth, and so on. The old crones sat weeping round, and soon after carried off all they could lay their hands upon, and left their benefactress to her fate. They were no sooner gone than

she unexpectedly recovered, and sent to have her things back again; but not one of them could she get, and she was left without a rag to her back, or a friend to condole with her.

Or was it to display the decay of her charms and recall her long-forgotten triumphs to the memory of the only person who could bear witness to them? Was it to show the proud remains of herself to those who remembered or had often heard what she was—her skin like shrivelled alabaster, her emaciated features chiseled by nature's finest hand, her eyes that when a smile lighted them up, still shone like diamonds, the vermilion hues that still bloomed among wrinkles? Was it to talk of bone-lace, of the flounces and brocades of the last century, of race-balls in the year 1762, and of the scores of lovers that had died at her feet, and to set whole counties in a flame again, only, with a dream of faded beauty? Whether it was for this, or whether she meant to leave her friend any thing (as was indeed expected, all things considered, not without reason) nobody knows—for she never breathed a syllable on the subject herself, and died without a will. The accomplished coquet of twenty, who had pampered hopes only to kill them, who had kindled rapture with a look and extinguished it with a breath, could find no better employment at seventy than to revive the fond recollections and raise up the drooping hopes of her kinswoman, only to let them fall—to rise no more. Such is the delight we have in trifling with and tantalizing the feelings of others by the exquisite refinements, the studied sleights of love or friendship!

When a property is actually bequeathed, supposing the circumstances of the case and the usages of society to leave a practical discretion to the testator, it is most frequently in such portions as can be of the least service. Where there is much already, much is given; where much is wanted, little or nothing. Poverty invites a sort of pity, a miserable dole of assistance; necessity is dismissed with neglect and scorn; wealth attracts and allures to itself more wealth, by natural association of ideas, or by that innate love of inequality and injustice, which is the favourite principle of the imagination. Men like to collect money into large heaps in their life-time: they like to leave it in large heaps after they are dead. They grasp it into their own hands, not to use it for their own good, but to hoard, to lock it up, to make an object, an idol, and a wonder of it. Do you expect them to distribute it so as to do others good; that they wil like those who come after them better than themselves; that if they were willing to pinch and starve themselves, they will not deliberately defraud their sworn friends and nearest kindred of what would be of the utmost use to them? No, they will thrust their heaps of gold and silver into the hands of others (as their proxies,) to keep for them untouched, still increasing, still of no use to any one, but to pamper pride and avarice, to glitter in the huge, watchful, insatiable eye of fancy, to be deposited as a new offering at the shrine of Mammon, their God—this is with them to put it to its intelligible and proper use, this is fulfilling a sacred, indispensable duty, this cheers them in the solitude of the grave, and throws a gleam of satisfaction across the stony eye of death. But to think of frittering it down, of sinking it in charity, of throwing it away on the idle claims of humanity, where it would no longer peer in monumental pomp over their heads; and that too when on the point of death themselves, *in articulo mortis*, oh! it would be madness, waste, extravagance, impiety! Thus worldlings feel and argue without knowing it; and while they fancy they are studying their own interest or that of some booby successor, their *alter idem*, are but the dupes and puppets of a favourite idea, a phantom, a prejudice, that must be kept up somewhere (no matter where), if it still plays before and haunts their imagination while they have sense or understanding left—to cling to their darling follies.

There was a remarkable instance of this tendency *to the heap*, this desire to cultivate an abstract passion for wealth, in a will of one of the Thellusons some time back. This will went to keep the greater part of a large property from the use of the natural heirs and next-of-kin for a length of time, and to let it accumulate at compound interest in such a way and so long, that it would at last amount up in value to the purchase-money of a whole county. The interest accruing from the funded property or the rent of the lands at certain periods, was to be employed to purchase other estates, other parks and manors in the neighbourhood or farther off, so that the prospect of the future demesne that was to devolve at some distant time to the unborn lord of acres, swelled and enlarged itself, like a sea, circle without circle, vista beyond vista, till the imagination was staggered, and the mind exhausted. Now here was a scheme for the accumulation of wealth and for laying the foundation of family-aggrandisement purely imaginary, romantic—one might almost say, disinterested. The vagueness, the magnitude, the remoteness of the object, the resolute sacrifice of all immediate and gross advantages, clothe it with the privileges of an abstract idea, so that the project has the air of a fiction or of a story in a novel. It was an instance of what might be called posthumous avarice, like the love of posthumous fame. It had little more to do with selfishness than if the testator had appropriated the same sums in the same way to build a pyramid, to construct an aqueduct, to endow an hospital, or effect any other patriotic or merely fantastic purpose. He wished to heap up a pile of wealth (millions of acres) in the dim horizon of future years, that could be of no use to him or to those with whom he was connected by positive and personal ties, but as a crotchet of the brain, a gew-gaw of the fancy.* Yet to enable himself to put this scheme in execution, he had perhaps toiled and watched all his life, denied himself rest, food, pleasure, liberty, society, and persevered with the patience and self-denial of a martyr. I have insisted on this point the more, to show how much of the imaginary and speculative there is interfused even in those passions and purposes which have not the good of others for their object, and how little reason this honest citizen and builder of castles in the air would have had to treat those who devoted themselves to the pursuit of fame, to obloquy and persecution for the sake of truth and liberty, or who sacrificed their lives for their country in a just cause, as visionaries and enthusiasts, who did not understand what was properly due to their own interest and the securing of the *main-chance*. Man is not the creature of sense and selfishness, even in those pursuits which grow up out of that origin, so much as o imagination, custom, passion, whim, and humour.

I have heard of a singular instance of a will made by a person who was addicted to a habit of lying. He was so notorious for this propensity (not out of spite or cunning, but as a gratuitous exercise of invention), that from a child no one could ever believe a syllable he uttered. From the want of any dependence to be placed on him, he became the jest and by-word of the school where he was brought up. The last act of his life did not disgrace him. For having gone abroad, and falling into a dangerous decline, he was advised to return home. He paid all that he was worth for his passage, went on ship-board, and employed the few remaining days he had to live in making and executing his will; in which he bequeathed large estates in different parts of England, money in the funds, rich jewels, rings, and all kinds of valuables, to his old friends and acquaintance, who not knowing how far the force of nature could go, were not for some time convinced that all this fairy wealth had never had an existence any where but in the idle coinage of his brain, whose whims and projects were no more!—The extreme keeping in this character is only to be accounted for by supposing such an original constitutional levity as made truth entirely indifferent to him, and the serious importance attached to it by others an object of perpetual sport and ridicule!

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* The law of primogeniture has its origin in the principle here stated, the desire of perpetuating some one palpable and prominent proof of wealth and power.

The art of will-making chiefly consists in baffling the importunity of expectation. I do not so much find fault with this when it is done as a punishment and oblique satire on servility and selfishness. It is in that case *Diamond cut Diamond*—a trial of skill between the legacy-hunter and the legacy-maker, which shall fool the other. The cringing toad-eater, the officious tale-bearer, is perhaps well paid for years of obsequious attendance with a bare mention and a mourning-ring; nor can I think that Gil Blas' library was not quite as much as the coxcombry of his pretensions deserved. There are some admirable scenes in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, showing the humours of a legacy-hunter, and the different ways of putting him off with excuses and assurances of not being forgotten. Yet it is hardly right, after all, to encourage this kind of pitiful, bare-faced intercourse without meaning to pay for it; as the coquet has no right to jilt the lovers she has trifled with. Flattery and submission are marketable commodities like any other, have their price, and ought scarcely to be obtained under false pretences. If we see through and despise the wretched creature that attempts to impose on our credulity, we can at any time dispense with his services: if we are soothed by this mockery of respect and friendship, why not indemnify him like any other drudge, or as we satisfy the actor who performs a part in a play by our particular desire? But often these premeditated disappointments are as unjust as they are cruel, and are marked with circumstances of indignity, in proportion to the worth of the object. The suspecting, the taking it for granted that your name is down in a will, is sufficient provocation to have it struck out: the hinting at an obligation, the consciousness of it on the part of the testator, will make him determined to avoid the formal acknowledgment of it, at any expense. The disinheriting of relations is mostly for venial offences, not for base actions: we punish out of pique, to revenge some instance in which we have been disappointed of our wills, some act of disobedience to what had no reasonable ground to go upon: and we are obstinate in adhering to our resolution, as it was sudden and rash, and doubly bent on asserting our authority in what we have least right to interfere in. It is the wound inflicted upon our self-love, not the stain upon the character of the thoughtless offender, that calls for condign punishment. Crimes, vices, may go unchecked, or unnoticed: but it is the laughing at our weaknesses, or thwarting our humours, that is never to be forgotten. It is not the errors of others, but our own miscalculations, on which we wreak our lasting vengeance. It is ourselves that we cannot forgive. In the will of Nicholas Gimcrack, the virtuoso recorded in the Tatler, we learn, among other items, that his eldest son is cut off with a single cockle-shell for his undutiful behaviour in laughing at his little sister whom his father kept preserved in spirits of wine. Another of his relations has a collection of grasshoppers bequeathed him, as in the testator's opinion an adequate reward and acknowledgment due to his merit. The whole will of the said Nicholas Gimcrack, Esq., is a curious document and exact picture of the mind of the worthy virtuoso defunct,* where his various follies, littlenesses, and quaint

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* It is as follows:

"*The Will of a Virtuoso.*

"I, Nicholas Gimcrack, being in sound Health of Mind, but in great humours are set forth, as orderly and distinct as his butterflies' wings and cockle-shells and skeletons of fleas in glass-cases.

We often successfully try in this way to give the finishing stroke to our pictures, hang up our weaknesses in perpetuity, and embalm our mistakes in the memories of others.

> "Even from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
> Even in our ashes live their wonted fires."

I shall not speak here of unwarrantable commands imposed upon survivors, by which they were to carry into effect the sul-

Weakness of Body, do by this my Last Will and Testament bequeath my worldly Goods and Chattels in Manner following:
Imprimis, To my dear Wife,
One Box of Butterflies,
One Drawer of Shells,
A Female Skeleton,
A dried Cockatrice.
Item, To my Daughter *Elizabeth*,
My Receipt for preserving dead Caterpillars.
As also my Preparations of Winter May-Dew, and Embryo Pickle.
Item, To my little Daughter *Fanny*,
Three Crocodile's Eggs.
And upon the Birth of her first Child, if she marries with her Mother's Consent,
The Nest of a Humming-Bird.
Item, To my eldest Brother, as an Acknowledgment for the Lands he has vested in my Son Charles, I bequeath
My last Year's Collection of Grasshoppers.
Item, To his Daughter *Susanna*, being his only Child, I bequeath my
English Weeds pasted on Royal Paper,
With my large Folio of *Indian* Cabbage.

. . . .

Having fully provided for my Nephew Isaac, by making over to him, some Years since,
A Horned *Scarabæus*,
The Skin of a Rattle-Snake, and
The mummy of an *Egyptian* King,
I make no further Provision for him in this my Will.

My eldest Son *John* having spoken disrespectfully of his little Sister, whom I keep by me in Spirits of Wine, and in many other Instances behaved himself undutifully towards me, I do disinherit, and wholly cut off from any Part of this my Personal Estate, by giving him a single Cockle-Shell.

To my Second Son *Charles*, I give and bequeath all my Flowers, Plants, Minerals, Mosses, Shells, Pebbles, Fossils, Beetles, Butterflies, Caterpillars, len and revengeful purposes of unprincipled men, after they had breathed their last: but we meet with continual examples of the desire to keep up the farce (if not the tragedy) of life, after we, the performers in it, have quitted the stage, and to have our parts rehearsed by proxy. We thus make a caprice immortal, a peculiarity proverbial. Hence we see the number of legacies and fortunes left, on condition that the legatee shall take the name and style of the testator, by which device we provide for the continuance of the sounds that formed our names—and endow them with an estate, that they may be repeated with proper respect. In the *Memoirs of an Heiress*, all the difficulties of the plot turn on the necessity imposed by a clause in her uncle's will, that her future husband should take the family-name of Beverley. Poor Cecilia! What delicate perplexities she was thrown into by this improvident provision; and with what minute, endless, intricate distresses has the fair authoress been enabled to harrow up the reader on this account! There was a Sir Thomas Dyot in the reign of Charles II., who left the whole range of property which forms Dyot-street in St. Giles's and the neighbourhood, on the sole and express condition that it should be appropriated entirely to that sort of buildings, and to the reception of that sort of population, which still keep undisputed, undivided possession of it. The name was changed the other day to George-street, as a more genteel appellation, which, I should think, is an indirect forfeiture of the estate. This Sir Thomas Dyot I should be disposed to put upon the list of old English worthies—as humane, liberal, and no flincher from what he took in his head. He was no common-place man in his line. He was the best commentator on that old-fashioned text—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head."—We find some that are curious in the mode in which they shall be buried, and others

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Grasshoppers, and Vermin, not above specified: As also all my Monsters, both wet and dry, making the said *Charles* whole and sole Executor of this my Last Will and Testament, he paying or causing to be paid the aforesaid Legacies within the Space of Six Months after my Decease. And I do hereby revoke all other Wills whatsoever by me formerly made."—TATLER, Vol. IV., No. 216.

in the place. Lord Camelford had his remains buried under an ash-tree that grew on one of the mountains in Switzerland; and Sir Francis Bourgeois had a little mausoleum built for him in the College at Dulwich, where he once spent a pleasant, jovial day with the Masters and Wardens.* It is, no doubt, proper to attend, except for good reasons to the contrary, to these sort of requests; for by breaking faith with the dead, we loosen the confidence of the living. Besides, there is a stronger argument: we sympathise with the dead as well as with the living, and are bound to them by the most sacred of all ties, our own involuntary fellow-feeling with others!

Thieves, as a last donation, leave advice to their friends, physicians a nostrum, authors a manuscript work, rakes a confession of their faith in the virtue of the sex—all, the last drivellings of their egotism and impertinence. One might suppose that if any thing could, the approach and contemplation of death might bring men to a sense of reason and self-knowledge. On the contrary, it seems only to deprive them of the little wit they had, and to make them even more the sport of their wilfulness and short-sightedness. Some men think that because they are going to be hanged, they are fully authorized to declare a future state of rewards and punishments. All either indulge their caprices or cling to their prejudices. They make a desperate attempt to escape from reflection by taking hold of any whim or fancy that crosses their minds, or by throwing themselves implicitly on old habits and attachments.

An old man is twice a child: the dying man becomes the property of his family. He has no choice left, and his voluntary power is merged in old saws and prescriptive usages. The property we have derived from our kindred reverts tacitly to them: and not to let it take its course, is a sort of violence done to nature as well as custom. The idea of property, of something in common, does not mix cordially with friendship, but is inseparable from near relationship. We owe a return in kind, where we feel no obligation for a favour ; and consign our possessions to our next of kin as mechanically as we lean our heads on the pillow, and go out of the world in the same state of stupid amazement that we came into it !

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* Kellerman lately left his heart to be buried in the field of Valmy, where the first great battle was fought in the year 1792, in which the Allies were repulsed. Oh! might that heart prove the root from which the tree of Liberty may spring up and flourish once more, as the basil-tree grew and grew from the cherished head of Isabella's lover!

ESSAY VII.

On a Landscape of Nicholas Poussin.

"And blind Orion hungry for the morn."—Keats.

Orion, the subject of this landscape, was the classical Nimrod; and is called by Homer, "a hunter of shadows, himself a shade." he was the son of Neptune; and having lost an eye in some affray between the Gods and men, was told that if he would go to meet the rising sun, he would recover his sight. He is represented setting out on his journey, with men on his shoulders to guide him, a bow in his hand, and Diana in the clouds greeting him. He stalks along, a giant upon earth, and reels and falters in his gait, as if just awaked out of sleep, or uncertain of his way;—you see his blindness, though his back is turned. Mists rise around him, and veil the sides of the green forests; earth is dank and fresh with dews, the "grey dawn and the Pleiades before him dance," and in the distance are seen the blue hills and sullen ocean. Nothing was ever more finely conceived or done. The picture breathes the spirit of the morning; its moisture, its repose, its obscurity, wanting the miracle of light to kindle it into smiles: the whole is, like the principal figure in it, "a forerunner of the dawn." The same atmosphere tinges and imbues every object, the same dull light "shadowy sets off" the face of nature: one feeling of vastness, of strangeness, and of primeval forms, pervades the painter's canvas, and we are thrown back upon the first integrity of things.

This great and learned man might be said to see nature through the glass of time; he alone has a right to be considered as the painter of classical antiquity. Sir Joshua has done him justice in this respect. He could give to the scenery of his heroic fables the unimpaired look of original nature, full, solid, large, luxuriant, teeming with life and power; or deck it with all the pomp of art, with temples and towers, and mythologic groves. His pictures "denote a foregone conclusion." He applies nature to his purposes, works out her images according to the standard of his thoughts, embodies high fictions; and the first conception being given, all the rest seems to grow out of, and be assimilated to it, by the unfailing process of a studious imagination. Like his own Orion, he overlooks the surrounding scene, appears to "take up the isles as a very little thing, and to lay the earth in a balance." With a laborious and mighty grasp, he put nature into the mould of the ideal and antique; and was among painters (more than any one else) what Milton was among poets. There is in both something of the same pedantry, the same stiffness, the same elevation, the same grandeur, the same mixture of art and nature, the same richness of borrowed materials, the same unity of character. Neither the poet nor the painter lowered the subjects they treated, but filled up the outline in the fancy, and added strength and prominence to it; and thus not only satisfied, but surpassed the expectations of the spectator and the reader. This should be held for the triumph and the perfection of works of art. To give us nature, such as we see it, is well and deserving of praise; to give us nature such as we have never seen, but have often wished to see it, is better, and deserving of higher praise. He who can show the world in its first naked glory, with the hues of fancy spread over it, or in its high and palmy state, with the gravity of history stamped on the proud monuments of vanished empire,—who, by his "so potent art," can recall time past, transport us to distant places, and join the regions of imagination (a new conquest) to those of reality,—who teaches us not only what nature is, but what she has been, and is capable of being,—he who does this, and does it with simplicity, with truth, and grandeur, is lord of nature and her powers; and his mind is universal, and his art the master-art!

There is nothing in this "more than natural," if criticism could be persuaded to think so. The historic painter does not neglect or contravene nature, but follows her more closely up into her fantastic heights, or hidden recesses. He demonstrates what she would be in conceivable circumstances, and under implied conditions. He "gives to airy nothing a local habitation," not "a name." At his touch, words start up into images, thoughts become things. He clothes a dream, a phantom with form and colour, and the wholesome attributes of reality. *His* art is a second nature ; not a different one. There are those, indeed, who think that *not to copy nature,* is the rule for attaining perfection. Because they cannot paint the objects which they have seen, they fancy themselves qualified to paint the ideas which they have not seen. But it is possible to fail in this latter and more difficult style of imitation, as well as in the former humbler one. The detection, it is true, is not so easy, because the objects are not so nigh at hand to compare ; and therefore there is more room both for false pretension and for self-deceit. They take an epic motto or subject, and conclude that the spirit is implied as a thing of course. They paint inferior portraits, maudlin lifeless faces, without ordinary expression, or one look, feature, or particle of nature in them, and think that this is to rise to the truth of history. They vulgarise and degrade whatever is interesting or sacred to the mind, and suppose that they thus add to the dignity of their profession. They represent a face that seems as if no thought or feeling of any kind had ever passed through it, and would have you believe that this is the very sublime of expression, such as it would appear in heroes, or demi-gods of old, when rapture or agony was carried to its height. They show you a landscape that looks as if the sun never shone upon it, and tell you that it is not modern—that so earth looked when Titan first kissed it with his rays. This is not the true *ideal.* It is not to fill the moulds of the imagination, but to deface and injure them : it is not to come up to, but to fall short of the poorest conception in the public mind. Such pictures should not be hung in the same room with that of Orion.*

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* Every thing tends to show the manner in which a great artist is formed If any person could claim an exemption from the careful imitation of individual objects, it was Nicolas Poussin. He studied the antique, but he also studied nature. "I have often admired," says Vignuel de Marville, who knew him at a late period of his life, "the love he had for his art. Old as he was, I frequently saw him among the ruins of ancient Rome, out in the Campagna, or along the banks of the Tiber, sketching a scene that had pleased him ; and I often met him with his handkerchief full of stones, moss, or flow-

Poussin was, of all painters, the most poetical. He was the painter of ideas. No one ever told a story half so well; nor so well knew what was capable of being told by the pencil. He seized on, and struck off with grace and precision, just that point of view which would be likely to catch the reader's fancy. There is a significance, a consciousness in whatever he does (sometimes a vice, but oftener a virtue) beyond any other painter. His Giants sitting on the tops of craggy mountains, as huge themselves, and playing idly on their Pan's-pipes, seem to have been seated there these three thousand years, and to know the beginning and the end of their own story. An infant Bacchus or Jupiter is big with his future destiny. Even inanimate and dumb things speak a language of their own. His snakes, the messengers of fate, are inspired with human intellect. His trees grow and expand their leaves in the air, glad of the rain, proud of the sun, awake to the winds of heaven. In his Plague of Athens, the very buildings seem stiff with horror. His picture of the Deluge is, perhaps, the finest historical landscape in the world. You see a waste of waters, wide, interminable: the sun is labouring, wan and weary, up the sky; the clouds, dull and leaden, lie like a load upon the eye, and heaven and earth seem commingling into one confused mass! His human figures are sometimes "o'er-informed" with this kind of feeling. Their actions have too much gesticulation, and the set expression of the features borders too much on the mechanical and caricatured style. In this respect, they form a contrast to Raphael's, whose

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ers, which he carried home, that he might copy them exactly from nature. One day I asked him how he had attained to such a degree of perfection, as to have gained so high a rank among the great painters of Italy? He answered, I HAVE NEGLECTED NOTHING."—*See his Life lately published.* It appears from this account that he had not fallen into a recent error, that Nature puts the man of genius out. As a contrast to the foregoing description, I might mention, that I remember an old gentleman once asking Mr. West in the British Gallery, if he had ever been in Athens? To which the president made answer, No; nor did he feel any great desire to go; for that he thought he had as good an idea of the place from the Catalogue, as he could get by living there for any number of years. What would he have said, if any one had told him, he could get as good an idea of the subject of one of his great works from reading the catalogue of it, as from seeing the picture itself! Yet the answer was characteristic of the genius of the painter.

figures never appear to be sitting for their pictures, or to be conscious of a spectator, or to have come from the painter's hand. In Nicolas Poussin, on the contrary, every thing seems to have a distinct understanding with the artist: "the very stones prate of their whereabout:" each object has its part and place assigned, and is in a sort of compact with the rest of the picture. It is this conscious keeping, and, as it were, *internal* design, that gives their peculiar character to the works of our artist. There was a picture of Aurora in the British Gallery a year or two ago. It was a suffusion of golden light. The Goddess wore her saffron-coloured robes, and appeared just risen from the gloomy bed of old Tithonus. Her very steeds, milk-white, were tinged with the yellow dawn. It was a personification of the morning. —Poussin succeeded better in his classic than in his sacred subjects. The latter are comparatively heavy, forced, full of violent contrasts of colour, of red, blue, and black, and without the true prophetic inspiration of the characters. But in his Pagan allegories and fables he was quite at home. The native gravity and native levity of the Frenchman were combined with Italian scenery and an antique gusto, and gave even to his colouring an air of learned indifference. He wants, in one respect, grace, form, expression; but he has everywhere sense and meaning, perfect costume and propriety. His personages always belong to the class and time represented, and are strictly versed in the business in hand. His grotesque compositions in particular, his Nymphs and Fauns, are superior (at least, as far as style is concerned) even to those of Rubens. They are taken more immediately out of fabulous history. Rubens's Satyrs and Bacchantes have a more jovial and voluptuous aspect, are more drunk with pleasure, more full of animal spirits and riotous impulses; thev laugh and bound along—

> "Leaping like wanton kids in pleasant spring:"

but those of Poussin have more of the intellectual part of the character, and seem vicious on reflection, and of set purpose. Rubens's are noble specimens of a class; Poussin's are allegorical abstractions of the same class, with bodies less pampered, but with minds more secretly depraved. The Bacchanalian groups of the Flemish painter were, however, his master-pieces in composition. Witness those prodigies of colour, character, and expression at Blenheim. In the more chaste and refined delineation of classic fable, Poussin was without a rival. Rubens, who was a match for him in the wild and picturesque, could not pretend to vie with the elegance and purity of thought in his picture of Apollo giving a poet a cup of water to drink, nor with the gracefulness of design in the figure of a Nymph squeezing the juice of a bunch of grapes from her fingers (a rosy wine-press) which falls into the mouth of a chubby infant below. But, above all, who shall celebrate, in terms of fit praise, his picture of the shepherds in the vale of Tempe going out in a fine morning of the spring, and coming to a tomb with this inscription:—Et ego in Arcadia vixi! The eager curiosity of some, the expression of others who start back with fear and surprise, the clear breeze playing with the branches of the shadowing trees, "the valleys low, where the mild zephyrs use," the distant, uninterrupted, sunny prospects speak (and forever will speak on) of ages past to ages yet to come![*]

Pictures are a set of chosen images, a succession of pleasant thoughts passing through the mind. It is a luxury to have the walls of our rooms hung round with them; and no less so to have such a gallery in the mind, to con over the relics of ancient art bound up "within the book and volume of the brain, unmixed (if it were possible) with baser matter!" A life spent among pictures, in the study and the love of art, is a happy noiseless dream: or rather, it is to dream and to be awake at the same time; for it has all "the sober certainty of waking bliss," with the romantic voluptuousness of a visionary and abstracted being. They are the bright consummate essences of things, and we may say that he

"Who of these delights can judge and knows
To interpose them oft, is not unwise."

The Orion, which I have here taken occasion to descant upon, is one of a collection of excellent pictures, as this collection is itself one of a series from the Old Masters, which have for some years past embrowned the walls of the British Gallery, and enriched the public eye. What hues (those of nature mellowed by time) breathe around, as we enter! What forms are there, woven into the memory! What looks, which only the answering looks of the spectator can express! What intellectual stores have been yearly poured forth from the shrine of ancient art! The works are various, but the names the same—heaps of Rembrandts frowning from the darkened walls, Rubens's glad gorgeous groups, Titian's more rich and rare, Claude's always exquisite, sometimes beyond compare, Guido's endless cloying sweetness, the learning of Poussin and the Caracci, and Raphael's princely magnificence, crowning all. We read certain letters and syllables in the Catalogue, and at the well-known magic sound, a miracle of skill and beauty starts to view. It might be thought that one year's prodigal display of such perfection would exhaust the labours of one man's life; but the next year, and the next to that, we find another harvest reaped and gathered in to the great garner of art, by the same immortal hands—

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[*] Poussin has repeated this subject more than once, and appears to have revelled in its witcheries. I have before alluded to it.

> "Old Genius the porter of them was;
> He letteth in, he letteth out to wend."

Their works seem endless as their reputation—to be many, as they are complete—to multiply with the desire of the mind to see more and more of them; as if there were a living power in the breath of fame, and in the very names of the great heirs of glory "there were propagation too!" It is something to have a collection of this sort to count upon once a year; to have one last, lingering look yet to come. Pictures are scattered "like stray-gifts through the world;" and while they remain, earth has yet a little gilding left, not quite rubbed off, dishonoured, and defaced. There are plenty of standard works still to be found in this country, in the collections at Blenheim, at Burleigh, and in those belonging to Mr. Angerstein, Lord Grosvenor, the Marquis of Stafford, and others, to keep up this treat to the lovers of art for many years: and it is the more desirable to reserve a privileged sanctuary of this sort, where the eye may dote, and the heart take its fill of such pictures as Poussin's Orion, since the Louvre is stripped of its triumphant spoils, and since he who collected it, and wore it as a rich jewel in his Iron Crown, the hunter of greatness and glory, is himself a shade!

ESSAY VIII.

On Going a Journey.

One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey, but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

"The fields his study, nature was his book."

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticising hedge-rows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow-room, and fewer incumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude; nor do I ask for

——"a friend in my retreat,
Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet."

The soul of a journey is liberty; perfect liberty, to think, feel, do, just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where Contemplation

"May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd,"

that I absent myself from the town for a while, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise or in a tilbury, to exchange good things with, and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud, I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sun-burnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wrack and sumless treasuries," burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull common-places, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis, better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave, oh, leave me to my repose!" I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "the very stuff of the conscience." Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart, set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far-distant horizon? I should be but bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, a neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship," say I. I like to be either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's, that "he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a time." So I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation by fits and starts. "Let me have a companion of my way," says Sterne, "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun goes down." It is beautifully said: but in my opinion, this continually comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show, it is insipid: if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of pleasure. You cannot read the book of nature, without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others. I am for the synthetical method on a journey, in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomize them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible, unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with any one for twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you remark the scent of a bean-field in crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveller has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the colour of a cloud, which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unprepared to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill humour. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—they may recall a number of ideas, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company, seems extravagance or affectation; on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it (otherwise the end is not answered), is a task to which few are competent. We must "give it an understanding, but no tongue." My old friend Coleridge, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale, a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. "He talked far above singing." If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have some one with me to admire the swelling theme; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden. They had "that fine madness in them which our first poets had; and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following:

> ——" Here be woods as green
> As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
> As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
> Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as many
> As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
> Here be all new delights, cool streams, and wells,
> Arbours o'ergrown with woodbine, caves and dells;
> Choose where thou wilt, while I sit by and sing
> Or gather rushes to make many a ring
> For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love,
> How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
> First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
> She took eternal fire that never dies;
> How she convey'd him softly in a sleep,
> His temples bound with poppy, to the steep
> Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
> Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
> To kiss her sweetest."——
>
> FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS.

Had I words and images at command like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds: but at the sight of nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out on the spot:—I must have time to collect myself.

In general, a good thing spoils out-of-door prospects: it should be reserved for Table-talk. L—— is for this reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out of doors; because he is the best within. I grant, there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey: and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavour of the viands we expect at the end of it. How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of night-fall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn!" These eventful moments in our lives are in fact too precious, too full of solid, heart-felt happiness to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop: they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea,

> "The cups that cheer, but not inebriate,"

and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal-cutlet! Sancho in such a situation once fixed upon cow-heel; and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then, in the intervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation, to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen—*Procul, O procul este profani!* These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them in idle talk; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger takes his hue and character from the time and place; he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker, or from the West Riding of Yorkshire, so much the better. I do not even try to sympathize with him, and he *breaks no squares*. I associate nothing with my travelling companion but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs, I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances, and destroys the abstraction of the scene.

He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits; or from having some one with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world: but your "unhoused free condition is put into circumscription and confine." The *incognito* of an inn is one of its striking privileges—"lord of one's-self, uncumber'd with a name." Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion—to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties—to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweet-breads, and to owe nothing but the score of the evening—and no longer seeking for applause and meeting with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the Gentleman in the parlour!* One may take one's choice of all characters in this romantic state of uncertainty as to one's real pretensions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively right-worshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint conjecture; and from being so to others, begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed common-places that we appear in the world: an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns—sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham-Common, where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas—at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St. Neot's (I think it was,) where I first met with Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons, into which I entered at once; and at a little inn on the borders of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's drawings, which I compared triumphantly (for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist) with the figure of a girl who had ferried me over the Severn. standing up in the boat between me and the fading twilight—at other times I might mention luxuriating in books with a peculiar interest in this way, as I remember sitting up half the night to read Paul and Virginia, which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame D'Arblay's Camilla. It was on the tenth of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the New Eloise, at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was St. Preux's description of his feelings as he first caught a glimpse from the heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, which I had brought with me as a *bonne bouche* to crown the evening with. It was my birth-day and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighbourhood to visit this delightful spot. The road to Llangollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham; and on passing a certain point, you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheatre, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, with "green upland swells that echo to the bleat of flocks" below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time "glittered green with sunny showers," and a budding ash-tree dipped its tender branches in the chiding stream. How proud, how glad I was to walk along the high road that commanded the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr. Coleridge's poems! But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters large as Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE; which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze.

> "The beautiful is vanished, and returns not."

Still I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot; but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret, and delight, the traces of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced! I could stand on some tall rock, and overlook the precipice of years that separates me from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now? Not only I myself have changed—the world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O sylvan Dee, as then thou wert in joy, in youth and gladness; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely!

There is hardly any thing that shows the short-sightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than travelling does. With change of place we change our ideas, nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy has only a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions; we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye; we take our fill of it; and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it: the horizon that shuts it from our sight also blots it from our memory, like a dream. In travelling through a wild barren country, I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Fopling Flutter, "all is a desert." All that part of the map that we do not see before us is a blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nutshell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county, kingdom to kingdom, lands to seas, making an image voluminous and vast;—the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written on a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true signification of that immense mass of territory and population, known by the name of China to us? An inch of paste-board on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life: things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piece-meal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out the single threads. So in coming to a place where we have formerly lived and with which we have intimate associations, every one must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names, that we had not thought of for years; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten!—To return to the question I have quitted above.

I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism; but Stonehenge will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure, the first consideration always is where we shall go: in taking a solitary ramble, the question is what we shall meet with by the way. The mind then is "its own place;" nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honours indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *éclat*—showed them that seat of the Muses at a distance,

> "With glittering spires and pinnacles adorn'd"—

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangle and stone-walls of halls and colleges—was at home in the Bodleian; and at Blenheim quite superseded the powdered Ciceroni that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to common-place beauties in matchless pictures.—As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions, that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen: there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome, that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramids are too mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by one's-self, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet with instant fellowship and support.—Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbour as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France," erect and satisfied; for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones. I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open to me. The whole is vanished like a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled: nothing remains but the Bourbons and the French people!—There is undoubtedly a sensation in travelling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else: but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference; and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must "jump" all our present comforts and connections. Our romantic and itineran character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful and in one sense instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves, as well as to our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings,

> "Out of my country and myself I go."

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts, do well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them: but we can be said only to fulfil our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in travelling abroad, if I could anywhere borrow another life to spend afterwards at home.

ESSAY IX.

Why Distant Objects Please.

Distant objects please, because, in the first place, they imply an idea of space and magnitude, and because, not being obtruded too close upon the eye, we clothe them with the indistinct and airy colours of fancy. In looking at the misty mountain-tops that bound the horizon, the mind is, as it were, conscious of all the conceivable objects and interests that lie between; we imagine all sorts of adventures in the interim; strain our hopes and wishes to reach the air-drawn circle, or to "descry new lands, rivers, and mountains," stretching far beyond it: our feelings carried out of themselves lose their grossness and their husk, are rarefied, expanded, melt into softness and brighten into beauty, turning to "ethereal mould, sky-tinctured." We drink the air before us, and borrow a more refined existence from objects that hover on the brink of nothing. Where the landscape fades from the dull sight, we fill the thin, viewless space with shapes of unknown good, and tinge the hazy prospect with hopes and wishes and more charming fears.

> "But thou, oh Hope! with eyes so fair,
> What was thy delighted measure?
> Still it whisper'd promised pleasure,
> And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail!"

Whatever is placed beyond the reach of sense and knowledge, whatever is imperfectly discerned, the fancy pieces out at its leisure; and all but the present moment, but the present spot. passion claims for its own, and, brooding over it with wings outspread, stamps it with an image of itself. Passion is lord of infinite space, and distant objects please because they border on its confines, and are moulded by its touch. When I was a boy, I lived within sight of a range of lofty hills, whose blue tops blending with the setting sun had often tempted my longing eyes and wandering feet. At last I put my project in execution, and on a nearer approach, instead of glimmering air woven into fantastic shapes, found them huge lumpish heaps of discoloured earth. I learned from this (in part) to leave "Yarrow unvisited," and not idly to disturb a dream of good.

Distance of time has much the same effect as distance of place. It is not surprising that fancy colours the prospect of the future (as it thinks good,) when it even effaces the forms of memory. Time takes out the sting of pain; our sorrows after a certain period have been so often steeped in a medium of thought and passion, that they "unmould their essence;" and all that remains of our original impressions is what we would wish them to have been. Not only the untried steep ascent before us, but the rude, unsightly masses of our past experience presently resume their power of deception over the eye: the golden cloud soon rests upon their heads, and the purple light of fancy clothes their barren sides. Thus we pass on, while both ends of our existence touch upon Heaven!—There is (so to speak) "a mighty stream of tendency" to good in the human mind, upon which all objects float and are imperceptibly borne along: and though in the voyage of life we meet with strong rebuffs, with rocks and quicksands, yet there is "a tide in the affairs of men," a heaving and a restless aspiration of the soul, by means of which, "with sails and tackle torn," the wreck and scattered fragments of our entire being drift into the port and haven of our desires! In all that relates to the affections, we put the will for the deed:—the instant the pressure of unwelcome circumstances is removed, the mind recoils from their grasp, recovers its elasticity, and re-unites itself to that image of good, which is but a reflection and configuration of its own nature. Seen in the distance, in the long perspective of waning years, the meanest incidents, enlarged and enriched by countless recollections, become interesting; the most painful, broken and softened by time, soothe. How any object, that unexpectedly brings back to us old scenes and associations, startles the mind! What a yearning it creates within us; what a longing to leap the intermediate space! How fondly we cling to, and try to revive the impression of all that we once were!

> "Such tricks hath strong Imagination!"

In truth, we impose upon ourselves, and know not what we wish It is a cunning artifice, a quaint delusion, by which, in pretending to be what we were at a particular moment of time, we would fain be all that we have since been, and have our lives to come over again. It is not the little, glimmering, almost annihilated speck in the distance, that rivets our attention and "hangs upon the beatings of our hearts:" it is the interval that separates us from it, and of which it is the trembling boundary, that excites all this coil and mighty pudder in the breast. Into that great gap in our being "come thronging soft desires" and infinite regrets. It is the contrast, the change from what we then were, that arms the half-extinguished recollection with its giant-strength, and lifts the fabric of the affections from its shadowy base. In contemplating its utmost verge, we overlook the map of our existence, and retread, in apprehension, the journey of life. So it is that in early youth we strain our eager sight after the pursuits of manhood; and, as we are sliding off the stage, strive to gather up the toys and flowers that pleased our thoughtless childhood.

When I was quite a boy, my father used to take me to the Montpelier Tea-gardens at Walworth. Do I go there now? No; the place is deserted, and its borders and its beds o'erturned. Is there, then, nothing that can

> "Bring back the hour
> Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower?"

Oh! yes. I unlock the casket of memory, and draw back the warders of the brain; and there this scene of my infant wanderings still lives unfaded, or with fresher dyes. A new sense comes upon me, as in a dream; a richer perfume, brighter colours start out; my eyes dazzle; my heart heaves with its new load of bliss, and I am a child again. My sensations are all glossy, spruce, voluptuous, and fine: they wear a candied coat, and are in holiday trim. I see the beds of larkspur with purple eyes; tall hollyhocks, red and yellow; the broad sunflowers, caked in gold, with bees buzzing round them; wildernesses of pinks, and hot-glowing pionies; poppies run to seed; the sugared lily, and faint mignonette, all ranged in order, and as thick as they can grow; the box-tree borders; the gravel-walks, the painted alcove, the confectionary, the clotted cream:—I think I see them now with sparkling looks; or have they vanished while I have been writing this description of them? No matter; they will return again when I least think of them. All that I have observed since, of flowers and plants, and grass-plots, and of suburb delights, seems, to me, borrowed from "that first garden of my innocence"—to be slips and scions stolen from that bed of memory. In this manner the darlings of our childhood burnish out in the eye of after-years, and derive their sweetest perfume from the first heart-felt sigh of pleasure breathed upon them,

——" like the sweet south,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour!"

If I have pleasure in a flower-garden, I have in a kitchen-garden too, and for the same reason. If I see a row of cabbage-plants or of peas or beans coming up, I immediately think of those which I used so carefully to water of an evening at W——m, when my days' tasks were done, and of the pain with which I saw them droop and hang down their leaves in the morning's sun. Again, I never see a child's kite in the air, but it seems to pull at my heart. It is to me "a thing of life." I feel the twinge at my elbow, the flutter and palpitation with which I used to let go the string of my own, as it rose in the air and towered among the clouds. My little cargo of hopes and fears ascended with it; and as it made a part of my own consciousness then, it does so still, and appears "like some gay creature of the element," my playmate when life was young, and twin-born with my earliest recollections. I could enlarge on this subject of childish amusements, but Mr. Leigh Hunt has treated it so well in a paper in the *Indicator*, on the productions of the toy-shops of the metropolis, that if I were to insist more on it, I should only pass for an imitator of that ingenious and agreeable writer, and for an indifferent one into the bargain.

Sounds, smells, and sometimes tastes, are remembered longer than visible objects, and serve, perhaps, better for links in the chain of association. The reason seems to be this: they are in their nature intermittent, and comparatively rare; whereas objects of sight are always before us, and, by their continuous succession, drive one another out. The eye is always open; and between any given impression and its recurrence a second time, fifty thousand other impressions have, in all likelihood, been stamped upon the sense and on the brain. The other senses are not so active or so vigilant. They are but seldom called into play The ear, for example, is oftener courted by silence than noise; and the sounds that break that silence sink deeper and more durably into the mind. I have for this reason a more present and lively recollection of certain scents, tastes, and sounds, than I have of mere visible images, because they are more original, and less worn by frequent repetition. Where there is nothing interposed between any two impressions, whatever the distance of time that parts them, they naturally seem to touch; and the renewed impression recalls the former one in full force, without distraction or competition. The taste of barberries, which have hung out in the snow during the severity of a North American winter, I have in my mouth still, after an interval of thirty years; for I have met with no other taste, in all that time, at all like it. It remains by itself, almost like the impression of a sixth sense. But the colour is mixed up indiscriminately with the colours of many other berries, nor should I be able to distinguish it among them. The smell of a brick-kiln carries the evidence of its own identity with it: neither is it to me (from peculiar associations) unpleasant. The colour of brickdust, on the contrary, is more common, and easily confounded with other colours. Raphael did not keep it quite distinct from his flesh-colour. I will not say that we have a more perfect recollection of the human voice than of that complex picture, the human face; but I think the sudden hearing of a well-known voice has something in it more affecting and striking than the sudden meeting with the face · perhaps, indeed, this may be because we have a more familiar remembrance of the one than the other, and the voice takes us more by surprise on that account. I am by no means certain (generally speaking) that we have the ideas of the other senses so accurate and well made out as those of visible form; what I chiefly mean is, that the feelings belonging to the sensations of our other organs, when accidentally recalled, are kept more separate and pure. Musical sounds, probably, owe a good deal of their interest and romantic effect to the principle here spoken of. Were they constant, they would become indifferent, as we may find with respect to disagreeable noises, which we do not hear after a time. I know no situation more pitiable than that of a blind fiddler, who has but one sense left (if we except the sense of snuff-taking*), and who has that stunned or deafened by his own villanous noises! Shakespear says,

> "How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night!"

It has been suggested, in explanation of this passage, that it is because in the day-time lovers are occupied with one another's faces, but that at night they can only distinguish the sound of each other's voices. I know not how this may be; but I have, ere now, heard a voice break so upon the silence,

> "To angels' 'twas most like,"

and charm the moonlight air with its balmy essence, while the budding leaves trembled to its accents. Would I might have heard it once more whisper peace and hope (as erst when it was mingled with the breath of spring), and with its soft pulsations lift winged fancy to heaven! But it has ceased, or turned where I no more shall hear it!—Hence, also, we see what is the charm of the shepherd's pastoral reed; and why we hear him, as it were, piping to his flock, even in a picture. Our ears are fancy-stung! I remember once strolling along the margin of a stream, skirted with willows and plashy sedges, in one of those low sheltered valleys on Salisbury Plain, where the monks of former ages had planted chapels and built hermits' cells. There was a little parish-church near, but tall elms and quivering alders hid it from my sight, when, all of a sudden, I was startled by the sound of the full organ pealing on the ear, accompanied by rustic voices and the willing choir of village-maids and children. It rose, indeed, "like an exhalation of rich distilled perfumes." The dew from a thousand pastures was gathered in its softness; the silence of a thousand years spoke in it. It came upon the heart like the calm beauty of death: fancy caught the sound, and faith mounted on it to the skies. It filled the valley like a mist, and still poured out its endless chaunt, and still it swells upon the ear, and wraps me in a golden trance, drowning the noisy tumult of the world!

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* See Wilkie's Blind Fiddler.

There is a curious and interesting discussion, on the comparative distinctness of our visual and other external impressions, in Mr. Fearn's Essay on Consciousness, with which I shall try to descend from this rhapsody to the ground of common sense and plain reasoning again. After observing, a little before, that ' nothing is more untrue than that sensations of vision do necessarily leave more vivid and durable ideas than those of grosser senses," he proceeds to give a number of illustrations in support of this position. "Notwithstanding," he says, "the advantages here enumerated in favour of sight, I think there is no doubt that a man will come to forget acquaintance, and many other visible objects, noticed in mature age, before he will in the least forget tastes and smells, of only moderate interest, encountered either in his childhood, or at any time since.

"In the course of voyaging to various distant regions, it has several times happened that I have eaten once or twice of different things that never came in my way before nor since. Some of these have been pleasant, and some scarce better than insipid; but I have no reason to think I have forgot, or much altered the ideas left by those single impulses of taste; though here the memory of them certainly has not been preserved by repetition. It is clear I must have seen, as well as tasted those things; and I am decided that I remember the tastes with more precision than I do the visual sensations.

"I remember having once, and only once, eat kangaroo in New Holland; and having once smelled a baker's shop, having a peculiar odour, in the city of Bassorah. Now both these gross ideas remain with me quite as vivid as any visual ideas of those places; and this could not be from repetition, but really from interest in the sensation.

"Twenty-eight years ago, in the island of Jamaica, I partook (perhaps twice) of a certain fruit, of the taste of which I have now a very fresh idea; and I could add other instances of that period.

"I have had repeated proofs of having lost retention of visual objects, at various distances of time, though they had once been familiar. I have not, during thirty years, forgot the delicate, and in itself most trifling sensation, that the palm of my hand used to convey, when I was a boy, trying the different effects of what boys call *light* and *heavy* tops; but I cannot remember within several shades of the brown coat which I left off a week ago. If any man thinks he can do better, let him take an ideal survey of his wardrobe, and then actually refer to it for proof.

"After retention of such ideas, it certainly would be very difficult to persuade me that feeling, taste, and smell can scarce be said to leave ideas, unless indistinct and obscure ones. . . . .

"Show a Londoner correct models of twenty London churches, and, at the same time, a model of each, which differs, in several considerable features, from the truth, and I venture to say he shall not tell you, in any instance, which is the correct one, except by mere chance.

"If he is an architect, he may be much more correct than any ordinary person: and this obviously is, because he has felt an interest in viewing these structures, which an ordinary person does not feel: and here interest is the sole reason of his remembering more correctly than his neighbour.

"I once heard a person quaintly ask another, How many trees there are in St. Paul's churchyard? The question itself indicates that many cannot answer it; and this is found to be the case with those who have passed the church a hundred times whilst the cause is, that every individual in the busy stream which glides past St. Paul's is engrossed in various other interests.

"How often does it happen that we enter a well-known apartment, or meet a well-known friend, and receive some vague idea of visible difference, but cannot possibly find out *what* it is: until at length we come to perceive (or perhaps must be told) that some ornament or furniture is removed, altered, or added in the apartment; or that our friend has cut his hair, taken a wig, or has made any of twenty considerable alterations in his appearance. At other times, we have no perception of alteration whatever, though the like has taken place.

"It is, however, certain, that sight, apposited with interest, can retain tolerably exact copies of sensations, especially if not too complex; such as of the human countenance and figure. Yet the voice will convince us, when the countenance will not; and he is reckoned an excellent painter, and no ordinary genius, who can make a tolerable likeness from memory. Nay, more, it is a conspicuous proof of the inaccuracy of visual ideas, that it is an effort of consummate art, attained by many years' practice, to take a strict likeness of the human countenance, even when the object is present; and among those cases, where the wilful cheat of flattery has been avoided, we still find in how very few instances the best painters produce a likeness up to the life, though practice and interest join in the attempt.

"I imagine an ordinary person would find it very difficult, supposing he had some knowledge of drawing, to afford, from memory, a tolerable sketch of such a familiar object as his curtain, his carpet, or his dressing-gown, if the pattern of either be at all various or irregular; yet he will instantly tell, with precision, either if his snuff or his wine has not the same character it had yesterday, though both these are compounds.

"Beyond all this I may observe, that a draper, who is in the daily habit of such comparisons, cannot carry in his mind the particular shade of a colour during a second of time; and has no certainty of tolerably matching two simple colours, except by placing the patterns in contact."—*Essay on Consciousness*, p. 303.

I will conclude the subject of this Essay with observing, that a nearer and more familiar acquaintance with persons has a different and more favourable effect than that with places or things. The latter improve by being removed to a distance, for we have no interest in *backbiting* them: the former gain by being brought nearer and more home to us, and thus stripped of artful and ill-natured misrepresentations. Report or imagination very seldom raises any individual so high in our estimation as to disappoint us greatly when we are introduced to him: prejudice and malice constantly exaggerate defects beyond the reality. Ignorance alone makes monsters or bugbears: our actual acquaintances are all very common-place people. The thing is, that as a matter of hearsay or conjecture, we make abstractions of particular vices, and irritate ourselves against some particular quality or action of the person we dislike:—whereas individuals are concrete existences, not arbitrary denominations or nicknames; and have innumerable other qualities, good, bad, and indifferent, besides the damning feature with which we fill up the portrait or caricature in our previous fancies. We can scarcely hate any one that we know. An acute observer complained, that if there was any one to whom he had a particular spite, and a wish to let him see it, the moment he came to sit down with him, his enmity was disarmed by some unforeseen circumstance. If it was a Quarterly Reviewer, he was in other respects like any other man. Suppose, again, your adversary turns out a very ugly man, or wants an eye, you are baulked in that way:—he is not what you expected, the object of your abstract hatred and implacable disgust. He may be a very disagreeable person, but he is no longer the same. If you come into a room where a man is, you find, in general, that he has a nose upon his face. "There's sympathy!" This alone is a diversion to your unqualified contempt. He is stupid, and says nothing, but he seems to have something in him when he laughs. You had conceived of him as a rank Whig or Tory—yet he talks upon other subjects. You knew that he was a virulent party-writer; but you find that the man himself is a tame sort of animal enough. He does not bite. That's something. In short, you can make nothing of it. Even opposite vices balance one another. A man may be pert in company, but he is also dull; so that you cannot, though you try, hate him cordially, merely for the wish to be offensive. He is a knave. Granted. You learn, on a nearer acquaintance, what you did not know before—that he is a fool as well; so you forgive him. On the other hand, he may be a profligate public character, and may make no secret of it; but he gives you a hearty shake by the hand, speaks kindly to servants, and supports an aged father and mother. Politics apart, he is a very honest fellow. You are told that a person has carbuncles on his face; but you have ocular proofs that he is sallow, and pale as a ghost. This does not much mend the matter; but it blunts the edge of the ridicule, and turns your indignation against the inventor of the lie; but he is ——, the editor of a Scotch Magazine; so you are just where you were. I am not very fond of anonymous criticism; I want to know who the author can be: but the moment I learn this, I am satisfied. Even —— would do well to come out of his disguise. It is the mask only that we dread and hate: the man may have something human about him! The notions, in short, which we entertain of people at a distance, or from partial representations, or from guess-work, are simple uncompounded ideas, which answer to nothing in reality: those which we derive from experience are mixed modes, the only true, and, in general, the most favourable ones. Instead of naked deformity or abstract perfection—

> "Those faultless monsters which the world ne'er saw"—

"the web of our lives is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipt them not; and our vices would despair, if they were not encouraged by our virtues." This was truly and finely said long ago, by one who knew the strong and weak points of human nature: but it is what sects and parties, and those philosophers whose pride and boast it is to classify by nicknames, have yet to learn the meaning of!

ESSAY X.

On Corporate Bodies.

Corporate bodies are more corrupt and profligate than individuals, because they have more power to do mischief, and are less amenable to disgrace or punishment. They feel neither shame, remorse, gratitude, nor good-will. The principle of private or natural conscience is extinguished in each individual (we have no moral sense in the breasts of others,) and nothing is considered but how the united efforts of the whole (released from idle scruples) may be best directed to the obtaining of political advantages or privileges to be shared as common spoil. Each member reaps the benefit, and lays the blame, if there is any, upon the rest. The *esprit de corps* becomes the ruling passion of every corporate body, compared with which the motives of delicacy or decorum towards others are looked upon as being both impertinent and improper. If any person sets up a plea of this sort in opposition to the rest, he is over-ruled, he gets ill-blood, and does no good: he is regarded as an interloper, a *black sheep* in the flock, and is either *sent to Coventry*, or obliged to acquiesce in the notions and wishes of those he associates and is expected to co-operate with. The refinements of private judgment are submitted to and negatived by a committee of the whole body, while the projects and interests of the Corporation meet with a secret but powerful support in the self-love of the different members. Remonstrance—opposition is fruitless, troublesome, invidious: it answers no one end: and a conformity to the sense of the company is found to be no less necessary to a reputation for good-fellowship than to a quiet life. "Self-love and social" here look like the same; and in consulting the interests of a particular class, which are also your own, there is even a show of public virtue. He who is a captious, impracticable, dissatisfied member of his little club or *coterie*, is immediately set down as a bad member of the community in general, as no friend to regularity and order, "a pestilent fellow," and one who is incapable of sympathy, attachment, or cordial co-operation in any department or undertaking. Thus the most refractory novice in such matters becomes weaned from his obligations to the larger society, which only breed him inconvenience without any adequate recompense, and wedded to a nearer and dearer one, where he finds every kind of comfort and consolation. He contracts the vague and unmeaning character of Man into the more emphatic title of Freeman and Alderman. The claims of an undefined humanity sit looser and looser upon him, at the same time that he draws the bands of his new engagements closer and tighter about him. He loses sight, by degrees, of all common sense and feeling in the petty squabbles, intrigues, feuds, and airs of affected importance, to which he has made himself an accessary. He is quite an altered man. "Really the society were under considerable obligations to him in that last business;" that is to say, in some paltry job or under-hand attempt to encroach upon the rights, or dictate to the understandings of the neighbourhood. In the mean time, they eat, drink, and carouse together. They wash down all minor animosities and unavoidable differences of opinion in pint-bumpers; and the complaints of the multitude are lost in the clatter of plates and the roaring of loyal catches at every quarter's meeting or mayor's feast. The town-hall reels with an unwieldy sense of self-importance: "the very stones prate" of processions: the common pump creaks in concert with the uncorking of bottles and tapping of beer-barrels: the market-cross looks big with authority. Every thing has an ambiguous, upstart, repulsive air. Circle within circle is formed, an *imperium in imperio:* and the business is to exclude from the first circle all the notions, opinions, ideas, interests, and pretensions of the second. Hence there arises not only an antipathy to common sense and decency in those things where there is a real opposition of interest or clashing of prejudice, but it becomes a habit and a favourite amusement in those who are "dressed in a little brief authority," to thwart, annoy, insult, and harass others on all occasions where the least opportunity or pretext for it occurs. Spite, bickerings, back-biting, insinuations, lies, jealousies, nicknames, are the order of the day, and nobody knows what it is all about. One would think that the mayor, aldermen, and liverymen were a higher and more select species of animals than their townsmen; though there is no difference whatever, but in their gowns and staff of office! This is the essence of the *esprit de corps*. It is certainly not a very delectable source of contemplation or subject to treat of.

Public bodies are so far worse than the individuals composing them, because the *official* takes place of the *moral sense*. The nerves that in themselves were soft and pliable enough, and responded naturally to the touch of pity, when fastened into a machine of that sort, become callous and rigid, and throw off every extraneous application that can be made to them with perfect apathy. An appeal is made to the ties of individual friendship: the body in general know nothing of them. A case has occurred which strongly called forth the compassion of the person who was witness of it: but the body (or any special deputation of them) were not present when it happened. These little weaknesses and "compunctious visitings of nature" are effectually guarded against, indeed, by the very rules and regulations of the society, as well as by its spirit. The individual is the creature of his feelings of all sorts, the sport of his vices and his virtues —like the fool in Shakespear, "motley's his proper wear:"—corporate bodies are dressed in a moral uniform; mixed motives do not operate there, frailty is made into a system, "diseases are turned into commodities." Only so much of any one's natural or genuine impulses can influence him in his artificial capacity as formally comes home to the aggregate conscience of those with whom he acts, or bears upon the interests (real or pretended,) the importance, respectability, and professed objects of the society. Beyond that point the nerve is bound up, the conscience is seared, and the torpedo-touch of so much inert matter operates to deaden the best feelings and harden the heart. Laughter and tears are said to be the characteristic signs of humanity. Laughter is common enough in such places as a set-off to the mock-gravity: but who ever saw a public body in tears? Nothing but a job or some knavery can keep them serious for ten minutes together.*

Such are the qualifications and the apprenticeship necessary to make a man tolerated, to enable him to pass as a cypher, or be admitted as a mere numerical unit, in any corporate body: ɔ be a leader and dictator, he must be diplomatic in impertinence, ınd officious in every dirty work. He must not merely conform to established prejudices; he must flatter them. He must not merely be insensible to the demands of moderation and equity; he must be loud against them. He must not simply fall in with all sorts of contemptible cabals and intrigues; he must be indefatigable in fomenting them, and setting every body together by the ears. He must not only repeat, but invent lies. He must make speeches and write hand-bills; he must be devoted to the wishes and objects of the society, its creature, its jackall, its busy-body, its mouth-piece, its prompter; he must deal in law-cases, in demurrers, in charters, in traditions, in common-places, in logic and rhetoric—in every thing but common sense and honesty. He must (in Mr. Burke's phrase) "disembowel himself of his natural entrails, and be stuffed with paltry, blurred sheets of parchment about the rights" of the privileged few. He must be a concentrated essence, a varnished, powdered representative of the vices, absurdities, hypocrisy, jealousy, pride, and pragmatical meanness of his party. Such a one by bustle and self-importance and puffing, by flattering one to his face, and abusing another behind his back, by lending himself to the weaknesses of some, and pampering the mischievous propensities of others, will pass for a great man in a little society.

Age does not improve the morality of public bodies. They grow more and more tenacious of their idle privileges and senseless self-consequence. They get weak and obstinate at the same time. Those, who belong to them, have all the upstart pride and pettifogging spirit of their present character ingrafted on the venerableness and superstitious sanctity of ancient institutions. They are naturally at issue, first with their neighbours, and next with their contemporaries, on all matters of common propriety and judgment. They become more attached to forms, the more obsolete they are; and the defence of every absurd and invidious distinction is a debt which (by implication) they owe to the dead as well as to the living. What might once have been of serious practical utility they turn to farce, by retaining the letter when the spirit is gone: and they do this the more, the more glaring the inconsistency and want of sound reasoning; for they think they thus give proof of their zeal and attachment to the abstract principle on which old establishments exist, the ground of prescription and authority. *The greater the wrong, the greater the right*, in all such cases. The *esprit de corps* does not take much merit to itself for upholding what is justifiable in any system or in the proceedings of any party, but for adhering to what is palpably injurious. You may exact the first from an enemy: the last is the province of a friend. It has been made a subject of complaint, that the champions of the Church, for example, who are advanced to dignities and honours, are hardly ever those who defend the common principles of Christianity, but those who volunteer to man the out-works, and set up ingenious excuses for he questionable points, the ticklish places in the established form of worship, that is, for those which are attacked from without, and are supposed in danger of being undermined by stratagem, or carried by assault!

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* We sometimes see a whole play-house in tears. But the audience at a theatre, though a public assembly, are not a public body. They are not incorporated into a frame-work of exclusive, narrow-minded interssts of their own. Each individual looks out of his own insignificance at a scene, *ideal* perhaps, and foreign to himself, but true to nature; friends, strangers, meet on the common ground of humanity, and the tears that spring from their breasts are those which "sacred pity has engendered." They are a mixed multitude melted into sympathy by remote, imaginary events, not a combination cemented by petty views, and sordid, selfish prejudices.

The great resorts and seats of learning often outlive in this way the intention of the founders, as the world outgrows them. They may be said to resemble antiquated coquets of the last age, who think every thing ridiculous and intolerable that was not in fashion when they were young, and yet are standing proofs of the progress of taste and the vanity of human pretensions. Our universities are, in a great measure, become cisterns to hold, not conduits to disperse knowledge. The age has the start of them; that is, other sources of knowledge have been opened since their formation, to which the world have had access, and have drunk plentifully at those living fountains, but from which *they* are debarred by the tenor of their charter, and as a matter of dignity and privilege. They have grown poor, like the old grandees in some countries, by subsisting on the inheritance of learning, while the people have grown rich by trade. They are too much in the nature of *fixtures* in intellect: they stop the way in the road to truth; or at any rate (for they do not themselves advance) they can only be of service as a check-weight on the too hasty and rapid career of innovation. All that has been invented or thought in the last two hundred years they take no cognisance of, or as little as possible; they are above it; they stand upon the ancient land-marks, and will not budge; whatever was not known when they were first endowed, they are still in profound and lofty ignorance of. Yet in that period how much has been done in literature, arts, and science, of which (with the exception of mathematical knowledge, the hardest to gainsay or subject to the trammels of prejudice and barbarous *ipse dixits*,) scarce any trace is to be found in the authentic modes of study and legitimate inquiry, which prevail at either of our Universities! The unavoidable aim of all corporate bodies of learning is not to grow wise, or teach others wisdom, but to prevent any one else from being or seeming wiser than themselves; in other words, their infallible tendency is in the end to suppress inquiry and darken knowledge, by setting limits to the mind of man, and saying to his proud spirit, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther!* It would not be an unedifying experiment to make a collection of the titles of works published in the course of the year by Members of the Universities. If any attempt is to be made to patch up an idle system in policy or legislation or church-government, it is by a Member of the University: if any hashed-up speculation on an old exploded argument is to be brought forward "in spite of *shame*, in erring reason's spite," it is by a Member of the University: if a paltry project is ushered into the world for combining ancient prejudices with modern time-serving, it is by a Member of the University. Thus we get at a stated supply of annual Defences of the Sinking Fund, Thoughts on the Evils of Education, Treatises on Predestination, and Eulogies on Mr. Malthus, all from the same source, and through the same vent. If they came from any other quarter, nobody would look at them; but they have an *Imprimatur* from dulness and authority: we know that there is no offence in them; and they are stuck in the shop-windows, and read (in the intervals of Lord Byron's works, or the Scotch Novels) in cathedral towns and close boroughs!

It is, I understand and believe, pretty much the same in more modern institutions for the encouragement of the Fine Arts. The end is lost in the means: rules take place of nature and genius; cabal and bustle and struggles for rank and precedence supersede the study and the love of art. A Royal Academy is a kind of hospital and infirmary for the obliquities of taste and ingenuity—a receptacle where enthusiasm and originality stop and stagnate, and spread their influence no farther, instead of being a school founded for genius, or a temple built to fame. The generality of those who wriggle, or fawn, or beg their way to a seat there, live on their certificate of merit to a good old age, and are seldom heard of afterwards. If a man of sterling capacity gets among them, and minds his own business, he is nobody; he makes no figure in council, in voting, in resolutions, or speeches. If he comes forward with plans and views for the good of the Academy and the advancement of art, he is immediately set upon as a visionary, a fanatic, with notions hostile to the interest and credit of the existing members of the society. If he directs the ambition of the scholars to the study of History, this strikes at once at the emoluments of the profession, who are most of them (by God's will) portrait-painters. If he eulogises the Antique, and speaks highly of the Old Masters, he is supposed to be actuated by envy to living painters and native talent. If, again, he insists on a knowledge of anatomy as essential to correct drawing, this would seem to imply a want of it in our most eminent designers. Every plan, suggestion, argument, that has the general purposes and principles of art for its object, is thwarted, scouted, ridiculed, slandered, as bearing a malignant aspect towards the profits and pretensions of the great mass of flourishing and respectable artists in the country. This leads to irritation and ill-will on all sides. The obstinacy of the constituted authorities keeps pace with the violence and extravagance opposed to it; and they lay all the blame on the folly and mistakes they have themselves occasioned or increased. It is considered as a personal quarrel, not a public question; by which means the dignity of the body is implicated in resenting the slips and inadvertencies of its members, not in promoting their common and declared objects. In this sort of wretched *tracasserie* the Barrys and H——s stand no chance with the Catons, the Tubbs, and the F——s. Sir Joshua even was obliged to hold himself aloof from them, and Fuseli passes as a kind of nondescript, or one of his own grotesques. The air of an Academy, in short, is not the air of genius and immortality; it is too close and heated, and impregnated with the notions of the common sort. A man steeped in a corrupt atmosphere of this description is no longer open to the genial impulses of nature and truth, nor sees visions of ideal beauty, nor dreams of antique grace and grandeur, nor has the finest works of art continually hovering and floating through his uplifted fancy; but the images that haunt it are rules of the Academy, charters, inaugural speeches, resolutions passed or rescinded, cards of invitation to a council-meeting, or the annual dinner, prize-medals, and the king's diploma, constituting him a gentleman and esquire. He "wipes out all trivial, fond records;" all romantic aspirations; "the Raphael grace, the Guido air;" and the commands of the Academy alone "must live within the book and volume of his brain, unmixed with baser matter." It may be doubted whether any work of lasting reputation and universal interest can spring up in this soil, or ever has done in that of any Academy. The last question is a matter of fact and history, not of mere opinion or prejudice; and may be ascertained as such accordingly. The mighty names of former times rose before the existence of Academies; and the three greatest painters, undoubtedly, that this country has produced, Reynolds, Wilson, and Hogarth, were not "dandled and swaddled" into artists in any institution for the Fine Arts. I do not apprehend that the names of Chantry or Wilkie (great as one, and considerable as the other of them is) can be made use of in any way to impugn the jet of this argument. We may find a considerable improvement in some of our artists, when they get out of the vortex for a time. Sir Thomas Lawrence is all the better for having been abstracted for a year or two from Somerset-House; and Mr. D——, they say, has been doing wonders in the North. When will he return, and once more "bid Britannia rival Greece?"—

Mr. Canning somewhere lays it down as a rule, that corporate bodies are necessarily correct and pure in their conduct, from the knowledge which the individuals composing them have of one another, and the jealous vigilance they exercise over each other's motives and characters; whereas people collected into mobs are disorderly and unprincipled from being utterly unknown and unaccountable to each other. This is a curious *pass* of wit. I differ with him in both parts of the dilemma. To begin with the first, and to handle it somewhat cavalierly, according to the model before us: we know, for instance, there is said to be honour among thieves, but very little honesty towards others. Their honour consists in the division of the booty, not in the mode of acquiring it: they do not (often) betray one another, but they will waylay a stranger, or knock out a traveller's brains: they may be depended on in giving the alarm when any of their posts are in danger of being surprised; and they will stand together for their ill-gotten gains to the last drop of their blood. Yet they form a distinct society, and are strictly responsible for their behaviour to one another and to their leader. They are not a mob, but a *gang*, completely in one another's power and secrets. Their familiarity, however, with the proceedings of the *corps* does not lead them to expect or to exact from it a very high standard of moral honesty; that is out of the question; but they are sure to gain the good opinion of their fellows by committing all sorts of depredations, fraud, and violence against the community at large. So (not to speak it profanely) some of Mr. C——'s friends may be very respectable people in their way—"all honourable men"—but their respectability is confined within party-limits; every one does not sympathize in the integrity of their views; the understanding between them and the public is not well-defined or reciprocal. Or, suppose a gang of pickpockets hustle a passenger in the street, and the mob set upon them, and proceeded to execute summary justice upon such as they can lay hands on, am I to conclude that the rogues are in the right, because theirs is a system of well-organized knavery, which they settled in the morning, with their eyes one upon the other, and which they regularly canvass at night, with a due estimate of each other's motives, character, and conduct in the business; and that the honest men are in the wrong, because they are a casual collection of unprejudiced, disinterested individuals, taken at a venture from the mass of the people, acting without concert or responsibility, on the spur of the occasion, and giving way to their instantaneous impulses and honest anger? Mobs in fact, then, are almost always right in their feelings, and often in their judgments, on this very account—that being utterly unknown to and disconnected with each other, they have no point of union or principle of co-operation between them, but the natural sense of justice recognized by all persons in common. They appeal, at the first meeting, not to certain symbols and watchwords privately agreed upon, like Free-Masons, but to the maxims and instincts proper to them as men. They have no other clue to guide them to their object but either the dictates of the heart, or the universally understood sentiments of society, neither of which are likely to be in the wrong. The flame, which bursts out and blazes from popular sympathy, is made of honest, but homely materials. It is not kindled by sparks of wit or sophistry, nor damped by the cold calculations of self-interest. The multitude may be wantonly set on by others, as is too often the case, or be carried too far in the impulse of rage and disappointment; but their resentment, when they are left to themselves, is almost uniformly, in the first instance, excited by some evident abuse and wrong; and the excesses into which they run arise from that very want of foresight and regular system which is a pledge of the uprightness and heartiness of their intentions. In short, the only class of persons to whom the above courtly charge of sinister and corrupt motives is not applicable, is that body of individuals which usually goes by the name of the *People!*

ESSAY XI.

On the Knowledge of Character.

It is astonishing, with all our opportunities and practice, how little we know of this subject. For myself, I feel that the more I learn, the less I understand it.

I remember, several years ago, a conversation in the *Diligence* coming from Paris, in which, on its being mentioned that a man had married his wife after thirteen years' courtship, a fellow-countryman of mine observed, that "then, at least, he would be acquainted with her character;" when a Monsieur P——, inventor and proprietor of the *Invisible Girl*, made answer, "No, not at all; for that the very next day she might turn out the very reverse of the character that she had appeared in during all the preceding time."* I could not help admiring the superior sagacity of the French juggler, and it struck me then that we could never be sure when we had got at the bottom of this riddle.

There are various ways of getting at a knowledge of character—by looks, words, actions. The first of these, which seems the most superficial, is perhaps the safest, and least liable to deceive: nay, it is that which mankind, in spite of their pretending to the contrary, are generally governed by. Professions pass for nothing, and actions may be counterfeited: but a man cannot help his looks. "Speech," said a celebrated wit, "was given to man to conceal his thoughts." Yet I do not know that the greatest hypocrites are the least silent. The mouth of Cromwell is pursed up in the portraits of him, as if he was afraid to trust himself with words. Lord Chesterfield advises us, if we wish to know the real sentiments of the person we are conversing with, to look in his face, for he can more easily command his words than his features. A man's whole life may be a lie to himself and others: and yet a picture painted of him by a great artist would probably stamp his true character on the canvas, and betray the secret to posterity. Men's opinions were divided, in their life-time, about such prominent personages as Charles V. and Ignatius Loyola, partly, no doubt, from passion and interest, but partly from contradictory evidence in their ostensible conduct: the spectator, who has ever seen their pictures by Titian, judges of them at once, and truly. I had rather leave a good portrait of myself behind me than have a fine epitaph. The face, for the most part, tells what we have thought and felt—the rest is nothing. I have a higher idea of Donne from a rude, half-effaced outline of him prefixed to his poems, than from any thing he ever wrote. Cæsar's Commentaries would not have redeemed him in my opinion, if the bust of him had resembled the Duke of W———. My old friend, Fawcett, used to say, that if Sir Isaac Newton himself had lisped, he could not have thought any thing of him. So I cannot persuade myself that any one is a great man, who looks like a blockhead. In this I may be wrong.

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* "It is not a year or two shows us a man."—EMILIA, in OTHELLO.

First impressions are often the truest, as we find (not unfrequently) to our cost, when we have been wheedled out of them by plausible professions or studied actions. A man's look is the work of years: it is stamped on his countenance by the events of his whole life, nay more, by the hand of nature, and it is not to be got rid of easily. There is, as it has been remarked repeatedly, something in a person's appearance at first sight which we do not like, and that gives us an odd twinge, but which is overlooked in a multiplicity of other circumstances, till the mask is taken off; and we see this lurking character verified in the plainest manner in the sequel. We are struck at first, and by chance, with what is peculiar and characteristic; also with permanent *traits* and general effect: these afterwards go off in a set of unmeaning, common-place details. This sort of *prima facie* evidence, then, shows what a man is, better than what he says or does; for it shows us the habit of his mind, which is the same under all circumstances and disguises. You will say, on the other hand, that there is no judging by appearances, as a general rule. No one, for instance, would take such a person for a very clever man without knowing who he was. Then, ten to one, he is not: he may have got the reputation, but it is a mistake. You say, there is Mr. ———, undoubtedly a person of great genius: yet, except when excited by something extraordinary, he seems half dead. He has wit at will, yet wants life and spirit. He is capable of the most generous acts, yet meanness seems to cling to every motion. He looks like a poor creature—and in truth he is one! The first impression he gives you of him answers nearly to the feeling he has of his personal identity; and this image of himself, rising from his thoughts, and shrouding his faculties, is that which sits with him in the house, walks out with him into the street, and haunts his bed-side. The best part of his existence is dull, cloudy, leaden: the flashes of light that proceed from it, or streak it here and there, may dazzle others, but do not deceive himself. Modesty is the lowest of the virtues, and is a real confession of the deficiency it indicates. He who undervalues himself, is justly undervalued by others. Whatever good properties he may possess are, in fact, neutralized by a "cold rheum" running through his veins, and taking away the zest of his pretensions, the pith and marrow of his performances. What is it to me that I can write these TABLE-TALKS? It is true I can, by a reluctant effort, rake up a parcel of half-forgotten observations, but they do not float on the surface of my mind, nor stir it with any sense of pleasure, nor even of pride. Others have more property in them than I have: *they* may reap the benefit, *I* have only had the pain. Otherwise, they are to me as if they had never existed: nor should I know that I had ever thought at all, but that I am reminded of it by the strangeness of my appearance, and my unfitness for every thing else. Look in C——'s face while he is talking. His words are such as might "create a soul under the ribs of death." His face is a blank. Which are we to consider as the true index of his mind? Pain, languor, shadowy remembrances are the uneasy inmates there: his lips move mechanically!

There are people whom we do not like, though we may have known them long, and have no fault to find with them, except that their appearance is so much against them. That is not all, if we could find it out. There is, generally, a reason for this prejudice; for nature is true to itself. They may be very good sort of people, too, in their way, but still something is the matter. There is a coldness, a selfishness, a levity, an insincerity, which we cannot fix upon any particular phrase or action, but we see it in their whole persons and deportment. One reason that we do not see it in any other way may be, that they are all the time trying to conceal this defect by every means in their power. There is, luckily, a sort of *second-sight* in morals: we discern the lurking indications of temper and habit a long while before their palpable effects appear. I once used to meet with a person at an ordinary, a very civil, good-looking man in other respects, but with an odd look about his eyes, which I could not explain, as if he saw you under their fringed lids, and you could not see him again: this man was a common sharper. The greatest hypocrite I ever knew was a little, demure, pretty, modest-looking girl, with eyes timidly cast upon the ground, and an air soft as enchantment; the only circumstance that could lead to a suspicion of her true character was a cold, sullen, watery, glazed look about the eyes, which she bent on vacancy, as if determined to avoid all explanation with yours. I might have spied in their glittering, motionless surface, the rocks and quicksands that awaited me below! We do not feel quite at ease in the company or friendship of those who have any natural obliquity or imperfection of person. The reason is, they are not on the best terms with themselves, and are sometimes apt to play off on others the tricks that nature has played them. This, however, is a remark that, perhaps, ought not to have been made. I know a person to whom it has been objected as a disqualification for friendship, that he never shakes you cordially by the hand. I own this is a *damper* to sanguine and florid temperaments, who abound in these practical demonstrations and "compliments extern." The same person, who testifies the least pleasure at meeting you, is the last to quit his seat in your company, grapples with a subject in conversation right earnestly, and is, I take it, backward to give up a cause or a friend. Cold and distant in appearance, he piques himself on being the king of *good haters*, and a no less zealous partisan. The most phlegmatic constitutions often contain the most inflammable spirits—as fire is struck from the hardest flints.

And this is another reason that makes it difficult to judge of character. Extremes meet ; and qualities display themselves by the most contradictory appearances. Any inclination, in consequence of being generally suppressed, vents itself the more violently when an opportunity presents itself: the greatest grossness sometimes accompanies the greatest refinement, as a natural relief, one to the other ; and we find the most reserved and indifferent tempers at the beginning of an entertainment, or an acquaintance, turn out the most communicative and cordial at the end of it. Some spirits exhaust themselves at first : others gain strength by progression. Some minds have a greater facility of throwing off impressions, and are, as it were, more transparent or porous than others. Thus the French present a marked contrast to the English in this respect. A Frenchman addresses you at once with a sort of lively indifference : an Englishman is more on his guard, feels his way, and is either exceedingly silent, or lets you into his whole confidence, which he cannot so well impart to an entire stranger. Again, a Frenchman is naturally humane : an Englishman is, I should say, only friendly by habit. His virtues and his vices cost him more than they do his more gay and volatile neighbours. An Englishman is said to speak his mind more plainly than others :—yes, if it will give you pain to hear it. He does not care whom he offends by his discourse : a foreigner generally strives to oblige in what he says. The French are accused of promising more than they perform. That may be, and yet they may perform as many good-natured acts as the English, if the latter are as averse to perform as they are to promise. Even the professions of the French may be sincere at the time, or arise out of the impulse of the moment ; though their desire to serve you may be neither very violent nor very lasting. I cannot think, notwithstanding, that the French are no a serious people ; nay, that they are not a more reflecting people than the common run of the English. Let those who think them merely light and mercurial, explain that enigma, their everlasting prosing tragedy. The English are considered as comparatively a slow, plodding people. If the French are quicker, they are also more plodding. See, for example, how highly finished and elaborate their works of art are! How systematic and correct they aim at being in all their productions of a graver cast! "If the French have a fault," as Yorick said, "it is that they are too grave." With wit, sense, cheerfulness, patience, good-nature, and refinement of manners, all they want is imagination and sturdiness of moral principle! Such are some of the contradictions in the character of the two nations, and so little does the character of either appear to have been understood! Nothing can be more ridiculous, indeed, than the way in which we exaggerate each other's vices and extenuate our own. The whole is an affair of prejudice on one side of the question, and of partiality on the other. Travellers who set out to carry back a true report of the case appear to lose not only the use of their understandings, but of their senses, the instant they set foot in a foreign land. The commonest facts and appearances are distorted and discoloured. They go abroad with certain preconceived notions on the subject, and they make every thing answer, in reason's spite, to their favourite theory. In addition to the difficulty of explaining customs and manners foreign to our own, there are all the obstacles of wilful prepossession thrown in the way. It is not, therefore, much to be wondered at that nations have arrived at so little knowledge of one another's characters; and that, where the object has been to widen the breach between them, any slight differences that occur are easily blown into a blaze of fury by repeated misrepresentations, and all the exaggerations that malice or folly can invent!

This ignorance of character is not confined to foreign nations: we are ignorant of that of our own countrymen in a class a little below or above ourselves. We can hardly pretend to pronounce magisterially on the good or bad qualities of strangers; and, at the same time, we are ignorant of those of our friends, of our kindred, and of our own. We are in all these cases either too near or too far off the object, to judge of it properly.

Persons, for instance, in a higher or middle rank of life, know little or nothing of the characters of those below them, as servants, country-people, &c. I would lay it down in the first place as a general rule on this subject, that all uneducated people are hypocrites. Their sole business is to deceive. They imagine themselves in a state of hostility with others, and stratagems are fair in war. The inmates of the kitchen and the parlour are always (as far as respects their feelings and intentions towards each other) in Hobbes's "state of nature." Servants and others in that line of life have nothing to exercise their spare talents for invention upon but those about them. Their superfluous electrical particles of wit and fancy are not carried off by those established and fashionable conductors, novels and romances. Their faculties are not buried in books, but all alive and stirring, erect and bristling like a cat's back. Their coarse conversation sparkles with "wild wit, invention ever new." Their betters try all they can to set themselves up above them, and they try all they can to pull them down to their own level. They do this by getting up a little comic interlude, a daily, domestic, homely drama out of the odds and ends of the family-failings, of which there is in general a pretty plentiful supply, or make up the deficiency of materials out of their own heads. They turn the qualities of their masters and mistresses inside out, and any real kindness or condescension only sets them the more against you. They are not to be taken in in that way—they will not be baulked in the spite they have to you. They only set to work with redoubled alacrity, to lessen the favour or to blacken your character. They feel themselves like a degraded *caste*, and cannot understand how the obligations can be all on one side, and the advantages all on the other. You cannot come to equal terms with them—they reject all such overtures as insidious and hollow—nor can you ever calculate upon their gratitude or good-will, any more than if they were so many strolling Gipsies or wild Indians. They have no fellow-feeling, they keep no faith with the more privileged classes. They are in your power, and they endeavour to be even with you by trick and cunning, by lying and chicanery. In this they have nothing to restrain them. Their whole life is a succession of shifts, excuses, and expedients. The love of truth is a principle with those only who have made it their study, who have applied themselves to the pursuit of some art or science, where the intellect is severely tasked, and learns by habit to take a pride in, and to set a just value on the correctness of its conclusions. To have a disinterested regard for truth, the mind must have contemplated it in abstract and remote questions; whereas the ignorant and vulgar are only conversant with those things in which their own interest is concerned. All their notions are local, personal, and consequently gross and selfish. They say whatever comes uppermost—turn whatever happens to their own account—and invent any story, or give any answer that suits their purpose. Instead of being bigoted to general principles, they trump up any lie for the occasion, and the more of a *thumper* it is, the better they like it; the more unlooked-for it is, why so much the more of a *God-send!* They have no conscience about the matter; and if you find them out in any of their manœuvres, are not ashamed of themselves, but angry with you. If you remonstrate with them, they laugh in your face. The only hold you have of them is their interest—you can but dismiss them from your employment; and *service is no inheritance.* If they affect any thing like decen remorse, and hope you will pass it over, all the while they are probably trying to recover the wind of you. Persons of libera knowledge or sentiments have no kind of chance in this sort of mixed intercourse with these barbarians in civilized life. You cannot tell, by any signs or principles, what is passing in their minds. There is no common point of view between you. You have not the same topics to refer to, the same language to express yourself. Your interests, your feelings are quite distinct. You take certain things for granted as rules of action: they take nothing for granted but their own ends, pick up all their knowledge out of their own occasions, are on the watch only for what they can catch—are

> "Subtle as the fox for prey:
> Like warlike as the wolf, for what they eat."

They have indeed a regard to their character, as this last may affect their livelihood or advancement, none as it is connected with a sense of propriety; and this sets their mother-wit and native talents at work upon a double file of expedients, to bilk their consciences, and save their reputation. In short, you never know where to have them, any more than if they were a different species of animals; and in trusting to them, you are sure to be betrayed and over-reached. You have other things to mind, they are thinking only of you, and how to turn you to advantage. *Give and take* is no maxim here. You can build nothing on your own moderation or on their false delicacy. After a familiar conversation with a waiter at a tavern, you overhear him calling you by some provoking nick-name. If you make a present to the daughter of the house where you lodge, the mother is sure to recollect some addition to her bill. It is a running fight. In fact, there is a principle in human nature not willingly to endure the idea of a superior, a sour jacobinical disposition to wipe out the score of obligation, or efface the tinsel of external advantages—and where others have the opportunity of coming in contact with us, they generally find the means to establish a sufficiently marked degree of degrading equality. No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre, is an old maxim. A new illustration of this principle occurred the other day. While Mrs. Siddons was giving her readings of Shakespear to a brilliant and admiring drawing-room, one of the servants in the hall below was saying, "What, I find the old lady is making as much noise as ever!" So little is there in common between the different classes of society, and so impossible is it ever to reconcile the diversities of custom and knowledge which separate them.

Women, according to Mrs. Peachum, are "bitter bad judges" of the characters of men; and men are not much better of theirs, if we can form any guess from their choice in marriage. Love is proverbially blind. The whole is an affair of whim and fancy. Certain it is, that the greatest favourites with the other sex are not those who are most liked or respected among their own. I never knew but one clever man who was what is called a *lady's man;* and he (unfortunately for the argument) happened to be a considerable coxcomb. It was by this irresistible quality, and not by the force of his genius, that he vanquished. Women seem to doubt their own judgments in love, and to take the opinion which a man entertains of his own prowess and accomplishments for granted. The wives of poets are (for the most part) mere pieces of furniture in the room. If you speak to them of their husbands' talents or reputation in the world, it is as if you made mention of some office that they held. It can hardly be otherwise, when the instant any subject is started or conversation arises, in which men take an interest, or try one another's strength, the women leave the room, or attend to something else. The qualities then in which men are ambitious to excel, and which ensure the applause of the world, eloquence, genius, learning, integrity, are not those which gain the favour of the fair. I must not deny, however, that wit and courage have this effect. Neither is youth or beauty the sole passport to their affections.

> "The way of woman's will is hard to know,
> Harder to hit."

Yet there is some clue to this mystery, some determining cause; for we find that the same men are universal favourites with women, as others are uniformly disliked by them. Is not the load-stone that attracts so powerfully, and in all circumstances, a strong and undisguised bias towards them, a marked attention, a conscious preference of them to every other passing object or topic? I am not sure, but I incline to think so. The successful lover is the *cavalier servente* of all nations. The man of gallantry behaves as if he had made an assignation with every woman he addresses. An argument immediately draws off the scholar's attention from the prettiest women in the room. He accordingly succeeds better in argument—than in love!—I do not think that what is called *Love at first sight* is so great an absurdity as it is sometimes imagined to be. We generally make up our minds beforehand to the sort of person we should like, grave or gay, black, brown, or fair; with golden tresses or with raven locks;—and when we meet with a complete example of the qualities we admire, the bargain is soon struck. We have never seen any thing to come up to our newly discovered Goddess before, but she is what we have been all our lives looking for. The idol we fall down and worship is an image familiar to our minds. It has been present to our waking thoughts, it has haunted us in our dreams, like some fairy vision. Oh! thou, who, the first time I ever beheld thee, didst draw my soul into the circle of thy heavenly looks, and wave enchantment round me, do not think thy conquest less complete because it was instantaneous; for in that gentle form (as if another Imogen had entered) I saw all that I had ever loved of female grace, modesty, and sweetness!

I cannot say much of friendship as giving an insight into character, because it is often founded on mutual infirmities and prejudices. Friendships are frequently taken up on some sudden sympathy, and we see only as much as we please of one another's characters afterwards. Intimate friends are not fair witnesses to character, any more than professed enemies. They cool, indeed, in time—part, and retain only a rankling grudge at past errors and oversights. Their testimony in the latter case is not quite free from suspicion.

One would think that near relations, who live constantly together, and always have done so, must be pretty well acquainted with one another's character. They are nearly in the dark about it. Familiarity confounds all traits of distinction: interest and prejudice take away the power of judging. We have no opinion on the subject, any more than of one another's faces. The Penates, the household Gods, are veiled. We do not see the features of those we love, nor do we clearly discern their virtues or their vices. We take them as they are found in the lump:—by weight, and not by measure. We know all about the individuals, their sentiments, history, manners, words, actions, every thing: but we know all these too much as facts, as inveterate, habitual impressions, as clothed with too many associations, as sanctified with too many affections, as woven too much into the web of our hearts, to be able to pick out the different threads, to cast up the items of the debtor and creditor account, or to refer them to any general standard of right and wrong. Our impressions with respect to them are too strong, too real, too much *sui generis*, to be capable of a comparison with any thing but themselves. We hardly inquire whether those for whom we are thus interested, and to whom we are thus knit, are *better* or *worse* than others—the question is a kind of profanation—all we know is, they are *more* to us than any one else can be. Our sentiments of this kind are rooted and grow in us, and we cannot eradicate them by voluntary means. Besides, our judgments are bespoke, our interests take part with our blood. If any doubt arises, if the veil of our implicit confidence is drawn aside by any accident for a moment, the shock is too great, like that of a dislocated limb, and we recoil on our habitual impressions again. Let not that veil ever be rent entirely asunder, so that those images may be left bare of reverential awe, and lose their religion: for nothing can ever support the desolation of the heart afterwards!

The greatest misfortune that can happen among relations is a different way of bringing up, so as to set one another's opinions and characters in an entirely new point of view. This often lets in an unwelcome day-light on the subject, and breeds schisms, coldness, and incurable heart-burnings in families. I have sometimes thought whether the progress of society and march of knowledge does not do more harm in this respect, by loosening the ties of domestic attachment, and preventing those who are most interested in, and anxious to think well of one another, from feeling a cordial sympathy and approbation of each other's sentiments, manners, views, &c. than it does good by any real advantage to the community at large. The son, for instance, is brought up to the church, and nothing can exceed the pride and pleasure the father takes in him, while all goes on well in this favourite direction. His notions change, and he imbibes a taste for the Fine Arts. From this moment there is an end of any thing like the same unreserved communication between them. The young man may talk with enthusiasm of his "Rembrandts, Correggios, and stuff:" it is all *Hebrew* to the elder; and whatever satisfaction he may feel in hearing of his son's progress, or good wishes for his success, he is never reconciled to the new pursuit, he still hankers after the first object that he had set his mind upon. Again, the grandfather is a Calvinist, who never gets the better of his disappointment at his son's going over to the Unitarian side of the question. The matter rests here, till the grandson, some years after, in the fashion of the day and "infinite agitation of men's wit," comes to doubt certain points in the creed in which he has been brought up, and the affair is all abroad again Here are three generations made uncomfortable, and in a manner set at variance, by a veering point of theology, and the officious meddling of biblical critics! Nothing, on the other hand, can be more wretched or common than that upstart pride and insolent good fortune which is ashamed of its origin; nor are there many things more awkward than the situation of rich and poor relations. Happy, much happier, are those tribes and people who are confined to the same *caste* and way of life from sire to son, where prejudices are transmitted like instincts, and where the same unvarying standard of opinion and refinement blend countless generations in its improgressive, everlasting mould!

Not only is there a wilful and habitual blindness in near kindred to each other's defects, but an incapacity to judge from the quantity of materials, from the contradictoriness of the evidence. The chain of particulars is too long and massy for us to lift it or put it into the most approved ethical scales. The concrete result does not answer to any abstract theory, to any logical definition. There is black, and white, and grey, square and round—there are too many anomalies, too many redeeming points in poor human nature, such as it actually is, for us to arrive at a smart, summary decision on it. We know too much to come to any hasty or partial conclusion. We do not pronounce upon the present act, because a hundred others rise up to contradict it. We suspend our judgments altogether, because in effect one thing unconsciously balances another; and perhaps this obstinate, pertinacious indecision would be the truest philosophy in other cases, where we dispose of the question of character easily, because we have only the smallest part of the evidence to decide upon. Real character is not one thing, but a thousand things; actual qualities do not conform to any factitious standard in the mind, but rest upon their own truth and nature. The dull stupor under which we labour in respect of those whom we have the greatest opportunities of inspecting nearly, we should do well to imitate, before we give extreme and uncharitable verdicts against those whom we only see in passing, or at a distance. If we knew them better, we should be disposed to say less about them.

In the truth of things, there are none utterly worthless, none without some drawback on their pretensions, or some alloy of imperfection. It has been observed that a familiarity with the worst characters lessens our abhorrence of them; and a wonder is often expressed that the greatest criminals look like other men. The reason is that *they are like other men in many respects*. If a particular individual was merely the wretch we read of or conceive in the abstract, that is, if he was the mere personified idea of the criminal brought to the bar, he would not disappoint the spectator, but would look like what he would be—a monster! But he has other qualities, ideas, feelings, nay, probably virtues, mixed up with the most profligate habits or desperate acts. This need not lessen our abhorrence of the crime, though it does of the criminal; for it has the latter effect only by showing him to us in different points of view, in which he appears a common mortal, and not the caricature of vice we took him for, nor spotted all over with infamy. I do not at the same time think this a lax or dangerous, though it is a charitable view of the subject. In my opinion, no man ever answered in his own mind (except in the agonies of conscience or of repentance, in which latter case he throws the imputation from himself in another way) to the abstract idea of a *murderer*. He may have killed a man in self-defence, or "in the trade of war," or to save himself from starving, or in revenge for an injury, but always "so as with a difference," or from mixed and questionable motives. The individual, in reckoning with himself, always takes into the account the considerations of time, place, and circumstance, and never makes out a case of unmitigated, unprovoked villainy, of "pure defecated evil" against himself. There are degrees in real crimes: we reason and moralize only by names and in classes. I should be loth, indeed, to say, that "whatever is, is right:" but almost every actual choice inclines to it, with some sort of imperfect, unconscious bias. This is the reason, besides the ends of secresy, of the invention of *slang* terms for different acts of profligacy committed by thieves, pickpockets, &c. The common names suggest associations of disgust in the minds of others, which those who live by them do not willingly recognize, and which they wish to sink in a technical phraseology. So there is a story of a fellow who, as he was writing down his confession of a murder, stopped to ask how the word *murder* was spelt; this, if true, was partly because his imagination was staggered by the recollection of the thing, and partly because he shrunk from the verbal admission of it. "*Amen* stuck in his throat!" The defence made by Eugene Aram of himself against a charge of murder some years before, shows that he in imagination completely flung from himself the *nominal* crime imputed to him: he might, indeed, have staggered an old man with a blow, and buried his body in a cave, and lived ever since upon the money he found upon him, but there was "no malice in the case, none at all," as Peachum says. The very coolness, subtlety, and circumspection of his defence (as masterly a legal document as there is upon record) prove that he was guilty of the act, as much as they prove that he was unconscious of the *crime*.* In the same spirit, and I conceive with great metaphysical truth, Mr. Coleridge, in his tragedy of *Remorse*, makes Ordonio (his chief character) waive the acknowledgment of his meditated guilt to his own mind, by putting into his mouth that striking soliloquy:

"Say, I had laid a body in the sun!
Well! in a month there swarm forth from the corse
A thousand, nay, ten thousand sentient beings
In place of that one man. Say I had *kill'd* him!
Yet who shall tell me that each one and all
Of these ten thousand lives is not as happy
As that one life, which being push'd aside,
Made room for these unnumber'd."—ACT II. SC. II.

I am not sure, indeed, that I have not got this whole train of speculation from him; but I should not think the worse of it on that account. That gentlemen, I recollect, once asked me whether I thought that the different members of a family really liked one another so well, or had so much attachment as was generally supposed: and I said that I conceived the regard they had towards each other was expressed by the word *interest*, rather than by any other; which he said was the true answer. I do not know that I could mend it now. Natural affection is not pleasure in one another's company, nor admiration of one another's qualities; but it is an intimate and deep knowledge of the things that affect those, to whom we are bound by the nearest ties, with pleasure or with pain; it is an anxious, uneasy fellow-feeling with them, a jealous watchfulness over their good name, a tender and unconquerable yearning for their good. The love, in short, we bear them, is the nearest to that we bear ourselves. *Home*, according to the old saying, *is home, be it never so homely.* We love ourselves, not according to our deserts, but our cravings after good: so we love our immediate relations in the next degree (if not even sometimes in a higher one,) because we know best what they have suffered and what sits nearest to their hearts. We are implicated, in fact, in their welfare by habit and sympathy, as we are in our own.

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* The bones of the murdered man were dug up in an old hermitage. On this, as one instance of the acuteness which he displayed all through the occasion, Aram remarks, "Where would you expect to find the bones of a man sooner than in a hermit's cell, except you were to look for them in a cemetery?"—See NEWGATE CALENDAR for the year 1758 or '9.

If our devotion to our own interests is much the same as to theirs, we are ignorant of our own characters for the same reason. We are parties too much concerned to return a fair verdict, and are too much in the secret of our own motives or situation not to be able to give a favourable turn to our actions. We exercise a liberal criticism upon ourselves, and put off the final decision to a late day. The field is large and open. Hamlet exclaims, with a noble magnanimity, "I count myself indifferent honest, and yet I could accuse me of such things!" If you could prove to a man that he is a knave, it would not make much difference in his opinion; his self-love is stronger than his love of virtue. Hypocrisy is generally used as a mask to deceive the world, not to impose on ourselves: for once detect the delinquent in his knavery, and he laughs in your face or glories in his iniquity. This at least happens, except where there is a contradiction in the character, and our vices are involuntary and at variance with our convictions. One great difficulty is to distinguish ostensible motives, or such as we acknowledge to ourselves, from the tacit or secret springs of action. A man changes his opinion readily, he thinks it candour: it is levity of mind. For the most part, we are stunned and stupid in judging of ourselves. We are callous by custom to our defects or excellences, unless where vanity steps in to exaggerate or extenuate them. I cannot conceive how it is that people are in love with their own persons, or astonished at their own performances, which are but a nine days' wonder to every one else. In general, it may be laid down that we are liable to this twofold mistake in judging of our own talents: we, in the first place, nurse the rickety bantling, we think much of that which has cost us much pains and labour, and which goes against the grain; and we also set little store by what we do with most ease to ourselves, and therefore best. The works of the greatest genius are produced almost unconsciously, with an ignorance on the part of the persons themselves that they have done anything extraordinary. Nature has done it for them. How little Shakespear seems to have thought of himself or of his fame! Yet, if "to know another well, were to know one's self," he must have been acquainted with his own pretensions and character, "who knew all qualities with a learned spirit." His eye seems never to have been bent upon himself, but outwards upon nature. A man, who thinks highly of himself, may almost set it down that it is without reason. Milton, notwithstanding, appears to have had a high opinion of himself, and to have made it good. He was conscious of his powers, and great by design. Perhaps his tenaciousness, on the score of his own merit, might arise from an early habit of polemical writing, in which his pretensions were continually called to the bar of prejudice and party spirit, and he had to plead not guilty to the indictment. Some men have died unconscious of immortality; as others have almost exhausted the sense of it in their life-time. Correggio might be mentioned as an instance of the one, Voltaire of the other.

There is nothing that helps a man in his conduct through life more than a knowledge of his own characteristic weaknesses (which, guarded against, become his strength), as there is nothing that tends more to the success of a man's talents than his knowing the limits of his faculties, which are thus concentrated on some practicable object. One man can do but one thing. Universal pretensions end in nothing. Or, as Butler has it, too much wit requires

"As much again to govern it."

There are those who have gone (for want of this self-knowledge) strangely out of their way, and others who have never found it We find many who succeed in certain departments, and are yet melancholy and dissatisfied, because they failed in the one to which they first devoted themselves, like discarded lovers who pine after their scornful mistress. I will conclude with observing, that authors in general over-rate the extent and value of posthumous fame : for what (as it has been asked) is the amount even of Shakespear's fame ? That in that very country which boasts his genius and his birth, perhaps scarce one person in ten has ever heard of his name, or read a syllable of his writings !

ESSAY XII.

On the Fear of Death.

"And our little life is rounded with a sleep."

Perhaps the best cure for the fear of death is to reflect that life has a beginning as well as an end. There was a time when we were not: this gives us no concern—why then should it trouble us that a time will come when we shall cease to be? I have no wish to have been alive a hundred years ago, or in the reign of Queen Anne: why should I regret and lay it so much to heart that I shall not be alive a hundred years hence, in the reign of I cannot tell whom?

When Bickerstaff wrote his Essays, I knew nothing of the subjects of them: nay, much later, and but the other day, as it were, in the beginning of the reign of George III., when Goldsmith, Johnson, Burke, used to meet at the Globe, when Garrick was in his glory, and Reynolds was over head and ears with his portraits, and Sterne brought out the volumes of Tristram Shandy year by year, it was without consulting me: I had not the slightest intimation of what was going on: the debates in the House of Commons on the American war, or the firing at Bunker's Hill, disturbed not me: yet I thought this no evil—I neither ate, drank, nor was merry, yet I did not complain: I had not then looked out into this breathing world, yet I was well; and the world did quite as well without me as I did without it! Why then should I make all this outcry about parting with it, and being no worse off than I was before? There is nothing in the recollection that at a certain time we were not come into the world, that "the gorge rises at"—why should we revolt at the idea that we must one day go out of it? To die is only to be as we were before we were born; yet no one feels any remorse or regret or repugnance in contemplating this last idea. It is rather a relief and disburthening of the mind: it seems to have been holiday-time with us then: we were not called to appear upon the stage of life, to wear robes or tatters, to laugh or cry, be hooted or applauded; we had lain *perdu* all this while, snug, ou of harm's way; and had slept out our thousands of centuries without wanting to be waked up; at peace and free from care, in a long nonage, in a sleep deeper and calmer than that of infancy, wrapped in the softest and finest dust. And the worst that we dread is, after a short, fretful, feverish being, after vain hopes and idle fears, to sink to final repose again, and forget the troubled dream of life! . . . Ye armed men, knights-templars, that sleep in the stone aisles of that old Temple Church, where all is silent above, and where a deeper silence reigns below (not broken by the pealing organ), are ye not contented where ye lie? Or would you come out of your long homes to go to the Holy War? Or do ye complain that pain no longer visits you, that sickness has done its worst, that you have paid the last debt to nature, that you hear no more of the thickening phalanx of the foe, or your lady's waning love; and that while this ball of earth rolls its eternal round, no sound shall ever pierce through to disturb your lasting repose, fixed as the marble over your tombs, breathless as the grave that holds you! And thou, oh! thou, to whom my heart turns, and will turn while it has feeling left, who didst love in vain, and whose first was thy last sigh, wilt not thou too rest in peace (or wilt thou cry to me complaining from thy clay-cold bed) when that sad heart is no longer sad, and that sorrow is dead, which thou wert only called into the world to feel!

It is certain that there is nothing in the idea of a pre-existent state, that excites our longing like the prospect of a posthumous existence. We are satisfied to have begun life when we did; we have no ambition to have set out on our journey sooner; and feel that we have quite enough to do to battle our way through since. We cannot say,

> "The wars we well remember of King Nine,
> Of old Assaracus and Inachus divine:"

neither have we any wish: we are contented to read of them in story, and to stand and gaze at the vast sea of time that separates us from them. It was early days then: the world was not *well-aired* enough for us: we have no inclination to have been up and stirring. We do not consider the six thousand years of the world before we were born as so much time lost to us: we are perfectly indifferent about the matter. We do not grieve and lament that we did not happen to be in time to see the grand mask and pageant of human life going on in all that period; though we are mortified at being obliged to quit our station before the rest of the procession passes.

It may be suggested in explanation of this difference, that we know from various records and traditions what happened in the time of Queen Anne, or even in the reigns of the Assyrian monarchs: but that we have no means of ascertaining what is to happen hereafter except by awaiting the event, and that our eagerness and curiosity are sharpened in proportion as we are in the dark about it. This is not at all the case; for at that rate we should be constantly wishing to make a voyage of discovery to Greenland or to the Moon, neither of which we have, in general, the least desire to do. Neither, in truth, have we any particular solicitude to pry into the secrets of futurity, but as a pretext for prolonging our own existence. It is not so much that we care to be alive a hundred or a thousand years hence, any more than to have been alive a hundred or a thousand years ago: but the thing lies here, that we would all of us wish the present moment to last forever. We would be as we are, and would have the world remain just as it is, to please our fancy.

"The present eye catches the present object"—

to have and to hold while it may; and we abhor, on any terms, to have it torn from us, and nothing left in its room. It is the pang of parting, the unloosing our grasp, the breaking asunder some strong tie, the leaving some cherished purpose unfulfilled, that creates the repugnance to go, and "makes calamity of so long life," as it often is.

——"Oh! thou strong heart!
There's such a covenant 'twixt the world and thee,
Ye're loth to break!"

The love of life, then, is an habitual attachment, not an abstract principle. Simply *to be* does not "content man's natural desire:" we long to be in a certain time, place, and circumstance. We would much rather be now, "on this bank and shoal of time," than have our choice of any future period, than take a slice of fifty or sixty years out of the Millennium, for instance. This shows that our attachment is not confined either to *being* or to *well-being ;* but that we have an inveterate prejudice in favour of our immediate existence, such as it is. The mountaineer will not leave his rock, nor the savage his hut; neither are we willing to give up our present mode of life, with all its advantages and disadvantages, for any other that could be substituted for it. No man would, I think, exchange his existence with any other man, however fortunate. We had as lief *not be*, as *not be ourselves*. There are some persons of that reach of soul that they would like to live two hundred and fifty years hence, to see to what height of empire America will have grown up in that period, or whether the English Constitution will last so long. These are points beyond me. But I confess I should like to live to see the downfall of Legitimacy. That is a vital question with me; and I shall like it the better, the sooner it happens!

No young man ever thinks he shall die. He may believe that others will, or assent to the doctrine that "all men are mortal" as an abstract proposition, but he is far enough from bringing it home to himself individually.* Youth, buoyant activity, and animal spirits hold absolute antipathy with old age as well as with death; nor have we, in the heyday of life, any more than in the thoughtlessness of childhood, the remotest conception how

> "This sensible warm motion can become
> A kneaded clod"—

nor how sanguine, florid health and vigour shall "turn to withered, weak, and grey." Or if in a moment of idle speculation we indulge in this notion of the close of life as a theory, it is amazing at what a distance it seems; what a long, leisurely perspective there is between; what a contrast its slow and solemn approach affords to our present gay fleeting existence! We eye the farthest verge of the horizon, and think what a way we shall have to look back upon, ere we arrive at our journey's end; and without our in the least suspecting it, the mists are at our feet, and the shadows of age encompass us. The two divisions of our lives have melted into each other: the extreme points close and meet with none of that romantic interval stretching out between them, that we had reckoned upon; and for the rich, melancholy, solemn hues of age, "the sear, the yellow leaf," the deepening shadows of an autumnal evening, we only feel a dank, cold mist encircling all objects, after the spirit of youth is fled. There is no inducement to look forward; and what is worse, little interest in looking back to what has become so trite and common. The pleasures of our existence have worn themselves out, are "gone into the wastes of time," or have turned their indifferent side to us: the pains by their repeated blows have worn us out, and have left us neither spirit nor inclination to encounter them again in retrospect. We do not want to rip up old grievances, nor to renew our youth like the phœnix, nor to live our lives twice over. Once is enough. As the tree falls, so let it lie. We shut up the book and close the account once for all!

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* "All men think all men mortal but themselves."--YOUNG.

It has been thought by some that life is like the exploring of a passage that grows narrower and darker the farther we advance, without a possibility of ever turning back, and where we are stifled for want of breath at last. For myself, I do not complain of the greater thickness of the atmosphere as I approach the *narrow house*. I felt it more formerly,* when the idea alone seemed to suppress a thousand rising hopes, and weighed upon the pulses of the blood. At present I rather feel a thinness and want of support, I stretch out my hand to some object and find none, I am too much in a world of abstraction; the naked map of life is spread out before me, and in the emptiness and desolation I see Death coming to meet me. In my youth I could not behold him for the crowd of objects and feelings, and Hope stood between us, saying—"Never mind that old fellow!" If I had lived *indeed*,

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* I remember, once in particular, having this feeling in reading Schiller's Don Carlos, where there is a description of death, in a degree that almost choaked me.

I should not so much care to die. But I do not like a contract of pleasure broken off unfulfilled, a marriage with joy unconsummated, a promise of happiness rescinded. My public and private hopes have been left a ruin, or remain only to mock me. I would wish them to be re-edified. I should like to see some prospect of good to mankind, such as my life began with. I should like to leave some sterling work behind me. I should like to have some friendly hand to consign me to the grave. On these conditions I am ready, if not willing, to depart. I could then write on my tomb—GRATEFUL AND CONTENTED! But I have thought and suffered too much to be willing to have thought and suffered in vain!—In looking back, it sometimes appears to me as if I had in a manner slept out my life in a dream or trance on the side of the hill of knowledge, where I have fed on books, on thoughts, on pictures, and only heard in half-murmurs the trampling of busy feet, or the noises of the throng below. Waked out of this dim, twilight existence, and startled with the passing scene, I have felt a wish to descend to the world of realities, and join in the chase. But I fear too late, and that I had better return to my bookish chimeras and indolence once more! *Zanetto, lascia le donne, e studia la matamatica.*

It is not wonderful that the contemplation and fear of death become more familiar to us as we approach nearer to it: that life seems to ebb with the decay of blood and youthful spirits; and that as we find every thing about us subject to chance and change, as our strength and beauty die, as our hopes and passions, our friends and our affections leave us, we begin by degrees to feel ourselves mortal!

I have never seen death but once, and that was in an infant. It is years ago. The look was calm and placid, and the face was fair and firm. It was as if a waxen image had been laid out in the coffin, and strewed with innocent flowers. It was not like death, but more like an image of life! No breath moved the lips, no pulse stirred, no sight or sound would enter those eyes or ears more. While I looked at it, I saw that no pain was there; it seemed to smile at the short pang of life which was over: but I could not bear the coffin-lid to be closed—it almost stifled me; and still as the nettles wave in a corner of the church-yard over his little grave, the welcome breeze helps to refresh me and ease the tightness at my breast!

An ivory or marble image, like Chantry's monument of the two children, is contemplated with pure delight. Why do we not grieve and fret that the marble is not alive, or fancy that it has a shortness of breath? It never was alive; and it is the difficulty of making the transition from life to death, the struggle between the two in our imagination, that confounds their properties painfully together, and makes us conceive that the infant that is but just dead, still wants to breathe, to enjoy, and look about it, and is prevented by the icy hand of death, locking up its faculties and benumbing its senses; so that, if it could, it would complain of its own hard fate. Perhaps religious considerations reconcile the mind to this change sooner than any others, by representing the spirit as fled to another sphere, and leaving the body behind it. But in reflecting on death generally, we mix up the idea of life with it, and thus make it the ghastly monster it is. We think how we should feel, not how the dead feel.

> " Still from the tomb the voice of nature cries;
> Even in our ashes live their wonted fires!"

There is an admirable passage on this subject in Tucker's *Light of Nature Pursued,* which I shall transcribe, as by much the best illustration I can offer of it.

" The melancholy appearance of a lifeless body, the mansion provided for it to inhabit, dark, cold, close and solitary, are shocking to the imagination; but it is to the imagination only, not to the understanding: for whoever consults this faculty will see at first glance, that there is nothing dismal in all these circumstances: if the corpse were kept wrapped up in a warm bed, with a roasting fire in the chamber, it would feel no comfortable warmth therefrom; were store of tapers lighted up as soon as day shuts in, it would see no objects to divert it; were it left at large, it would have no liberty, nor if surrounded with company, would be cheered thereby; neither are the distorted features expressions of pain, uneasiness, or distress. This every one knows, and will readily allow upon being suggested, yet still cannot behold, nor even cast a thought upon those objects without shuddering; for knowing that a living person must suffer grievously under such appearances, they become habitually formidable to the mind, and strike a mechanical horror, which is increased by the customs of the world around us."

There is usually one pang added voluntarily and unnecessarily to the fear of death, by our affecting to compassionate the loss which others will have in us. If that were all, we might reasonably set our minds at rest. The pathetic exhortation on country tomb-stones, "Grieve not for me, my wife and children dear," &c. is for the most part speedily followed to the letter. We do not leave so great a void in society as we are inclined to imagine, partly to magnify our own importance, and partly to console ourselves by sympathy. Even in the same family the gap is not so great: the wound closes up sooner than we should expect. Nay, *our room* is not unfrequently thought better than *our company*. People walk along the streets the day after our deaths just as they did before, and the crowd is not diminished. While we were living, the world seemed in a manner to exist only for us, for our delight and amusement, because it contributed to them. But our hearts cease to beat, and it goes on as usual, and thinks no more about us than it did in our lifetime. The million are devoid of sentiment, and care as little for you or me as if we belonged to the moon. We live the week over in the Sunday's newspaper, or are decently interred in some obituary at the month's end! It is not surprising that we are forgotten so soon after we quit this mortal stage: we are scarcely noticed, while we are on it. It is not merely that our names are not known in China—they have hardly been heard of in the next street. We are hand and glove with the universe, and think the obligation is mutual. This is an evident fallacy. If this, however, does not trouble us now, it will not hereafter. A handful of dust can have no quarrel to pick with its neighbours, or complaint to make against Providence, and might well exclaim, if it had but an understanding and a tongue, "Go thy ways, old world; swing round in blue ether, voluble to every age, you and I shall no more jostle!"

It is amazing how soon the rich and titled, and even some of those who have wielded great political power, are forgotten:

> "A little rule, a little sway,
> Is all the great and mighty have
> Betwixt the cradle and the grave"—

and, after its short date, they hardly leave a name behind them. "A great man's memory may, at the common rate, survive him half a year." His heirs and successors take his titles, his power, and his wealth—all that made him considerable or courted by others; and he has left nothing else behind him either to flatter or benefit the world. Posterity are not by any means so disinterested as they are supposed to be. They give their gratitude and admiration only in return for benefits conferred. They cherish the memory of those to whom they are indebted for instruction and delight; and they cherish it just in proportion to the instruction and delight they are conscious of receiving. The sentiment of admiration springs immediately from this ground; and cannot be otherwise than well-founded.*

The effeminate clinging to life as such, as a general or abstract idea, is the effect of a highly civilized and artificial state of society. Men formerly plunged into all the vicissitudes and dangers of war, or staked their all upon a single die, or some one passion, which, if they could not have gratified, life became a burthen to them—now our strongest passion is to think, our chief amusement is to read new plays, new poems, new novels, and this we may do at our leisure, in perfect security, *ad infinitum.* If we look into the old histories and romances, before the *belles-lettres* neutralized human affairs and reduced passion to a state of mental equivocation, we find the heroes and heroines not setting their lives "at a pin's fee," but rather courting opportunities of throwing them away in very wantonness of spirit. They raise their fondness for some favourite pursuit to its height, to a pitch of madness, and think no price too dear to pay for its full gratification. Every thing else is dross. They go to death as to a bridal bed, and sacrifice themselves or others without remorse at the shrine of love, of honour, of religion, or any other prevailing feeling. Romeo runs his "sea-sick, weary bark upon the rocks" of death, the instant he finds himself deprived of his Juliet; and she clasps his neck in their last agonies, and follows him to the same fatal shore. One strong idea takes possession of the mind and overrules every other; and even life itself, joyless without that, becomes an object of indifference or loathing. There is at least more of imagination in such a state of things, more vigour of feeling and promptitude to act, than in our lingering, languid, protracted attachment to life for its own poor sake. It is perhaps also better, as well as more heroical, to strike at some daring or darling object, and if we fail in that, to take the consequences manfully, than to renew the lease of a tedious, spiritless, charmless existence, merely (as Pierre says,) "to lose it afterwards in some vile brawl" for some worthless object. Was there not a spirit of martyrdom as well as a mixture of the reckless energy of barbarism in this bold defiance of death? Had not religion something to do with it: the implicit belief in another state of being, which rendered this of less value, and embodied something beyond it to the imagination; so that the rough soldier, the infatuated lover, the valorous knight, &c. could afford to throw away the present venture, and take a leap into the arms of futurity, which the modern sceptic shrinks back from, with all his boasted reason and vain philosophy, weaker than a woman! I cannot help thinking so myself; but I have endeavoured to explain this point before, and will not enlarge farther on it here.

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* It has been usual to raise a very unjust clamour against the enormous salaries of public singers, actors, and so on. This matter seems reducible to a *moral equation.* They are paid out of money raised by voluntary contributions in the strictest sense; and if they did not bring certain sums into the treasury, the Managers would not engage them. These sums are exactly in proportion to the number of individuals to whom their performances gives an extraordinary degree of pleasure. The talents of a singer, actor, &c. are therefore worth just as much as they wil' fetch.

A life of action and danger moderates the dread of death. It not only gives us fortitude to bear pain, but teaches us at every step the precarious tenure on which we hold our present being. Sedentary and studious men are the most apprehensive on this score. Dr. Johnson was an instance in point. A few years seemed to him soon over, compared with those sweeping contemplations on time and infinity with which he had been used to pose himself. In the *still-life* of a man of letters, there was no obvious reason for a change. He might sit in an arm-chair and pour out cups of tea to all eternity. Would it had been possible for him to do so! The most rational cure after all for the inordinate fear of death is to set a just value on life. If we merely wish to continue on the scene to indulge our headstrong humours and tormenting passions, we had better begone at once: and if we only cherish a fondness for existence according to the benefits we reap from it, the pang we feel at parting with it will not be very severe!

ESSAY XIII.

On Application to Study.

No one is idle, who can do any thing. It is conscious inability or the sense of repeated failure, that prevents us from undertaking, or deters us from the prosecution of any work.

Wilson the painter might be mentioned as an exception to this rule; for he was said to be an indolent man. After bestowing a few touches on a picture, he grew tired, and said to any friend who called in, "Now, let us go somewhere!" But the fact is, that Wilson could not finish his pictures minutely; and that those few masterly touches, carelessly thrown in of a morning, were all that he could do. The rest would have been labour lost. Morland has been referred to as another man of genius, who could only be brought to work by fits and snatches. But his landscapes and figures (whatever degree of merit they might possess) were mere hasty sketches; and he could produce all that he was capable of, in the first half-hour, as well as in twenty years. Why bestow additional pains without additional effect? What he did was from the impulse of the moment, from the lively impression of some coarse, but striking object; and with that impulse his efforts ceased, as they justly ought. There is no use in labouring, *invitâ Minerva*—nor any difficulty in it, when the Muse is not averse.

> "The labour we delight in physics pain."

Denner finished his unmeaning portraits with a microscope, and without being ever weary of his fruitless task; for the essence of his genius was industry. Sir Joshua Reynolds, courted by the Graces and by Fortune, was hardly ever out of his painting-room; and lamented a few days, at any time spent at a friend's house or at a nobleman's seat in the country, as so much time lost. That darkly-illuminated room "to him a kingdom was:" his pencil was the sceptre that he wielded, and the throne on which his sitters were placed, a throne for Fame. Here he felt indeed at home; here the current of his ideas flowed full and strong; here he felt most self-possession; most command over others; and the sense of power urged him on to his delightful task with a sort of vernal cheerfulness and vigour, even in the decline of life. The feeling of weakness and incapacity would have made his hand soon falter, would have rebutted him from his object; or had the canvas mocked, and been insensible to his toil, instead of gradually turning to

"A lucid mirror, in which nature saw
All her reflected features,"

he would, like so many others, have thrown down his pencil in despair, or proceeded reluctantly, without spirit and without success. Claude Lorraine, in like manner, spent whole mornings on the banks of the Tiber or in his study, eliciting beauty after beauty, adding touch to touch, getting nearer and nearer to perfection, luxuriating in endless felicity—not merely giving the salient points, but filling up the whole intermediate space with continuous grace and beauty! What farther motive was necessary to induce him to persevere, but the bounty of his fate? What greater pleasure could he seek for, than that of seeing the perfect image of his mind reflected in the work of his hand? But as is the pleasure and the confidence produced by consummate skill, so is the pain and the disheartening effect of total failure. When for the fair face of nature we only see an unsightly blot issuing from our best endeavours, then the nerves slacken, the tears fill the eyes, and the painter turns away from his art, as the lover from a mistress that scorns him. Alas! how many such have, as the poet says,

"Begun in gladness;
Whereof has come in the end despondency and madness"—

not for want of will to proceed, (oh, no!) but for lack of power!

Hence it is that those often do best (up to a certain point of common-place success) who have least knowledge and least ambition to excel. Their taste keeps pace with their capacity; and they are not deterred by insurmountable difficulties, of which they have no idea. I have known artists (for instance) of considerable merit, and a certain native rough strength and resolution of mind, who have been active and enterprizing in their profession, but who never seemed to think of any works but those which they had in hand; they never spoke of a picture, or appeared to have seen one: to them Titian, Raphael, Rubens, Rembrandt, Correggio, were as if they had never been: no tones, mellowed by time to soft perfection, lured them to their luckless doom, no divine forms baffled their vain embrace; no sound of immortality rung in their ears, or drew off their attention from the calls of creditors or of hunger: they walked through collections of the finest works, like the Children in the Fiery Furnace, untouched, unapproached. With these true *terræ filii* the art might be supposed to begin and end: they thought only of the subject of their next production, the size of their next canvas, the grouping, the getting in of the figures; and conducted their work to its conclusion with as little distraction of mind and as few misgivings, as a stage-coachman conducts a stage, or a carrier delivers a bale of goods, according to its destination. Such persons, if they do not rise above, at least seldom sink below themselves. They do not soar to the "highest Heaven of invention," nor penetrate the inmost recesses of the heart; but they succeed in all that they attempt or are capable of, as men of business and of industry in their calling. For them the veil of the Temple of Art is not rent asunder, and it is well: one glimpse of the Sanctuary, of the Holy of the Holies, might palsy their hands, and bedim their sight forever after!

I think there are two mistakes, common enough on this subject, viz.: That men of genius, or of first-rate capacity, do little, except by intermittent fits, or *per saltum*—and that they do that little in a slight and slovenly manner. There may be instances of this; but they are not the highest, and they are the exceptions, not the rule. On the contrary, the greatest artists have in general been the most prolific or the most elaborate, as the best writers have been frequently the most voluminous as well as indefatigable. We have a great living instance among writers, that the quality of a man's productions is not to be estimated in the inverse ratio of their quantity, I mean in the *Author of Waverley;* the fecundity of whose pen is no less admirable than its felicity. Shakespear is another instance of the same prodigality of genius; his materials being endlessly poured forth with no niggard or fastidious hand, and the mastery of the execution being (in many respects at least) equal to the boldness of the design. As one example among others that I might cite of the attention which he gave to his subject, it is sufficient to observe, that there is scarcely a word in any of his more striking passages that can be altered for the better. If any person, for instance, is trying to recollect a favourite line, and cannot hit upon some particular expression, it is in vain to think of substituting any other so good. That in the original text is not merely the best, but it seems the only right one. I will stop to illustrate this point a little. I was at a loss the other day for the line in Henry V.,

"*Nice* customs curtesy to great kings."

I could not recollect the word *nice:* I tried a number of others, such as *old, grave,* &c.—they would none of them do, but seemed all heavy, lumbering, or from the purpose: the word *nice,* on the contrary, appeared to drop into its place, and be ready to assist in paying the reverence due. Again,

"A jest's *prosperity* lies in the ear
Of him that hears it."

I thought, in quoting from memory, of "A jest's *success,*" "A jest's *renown,*" &c. I then turned to the volume, and there found the very word that of all others expressed the idea. Had Shakespear searched through the four quarters of the globe, he could not have lighted on another to convey so exactly what he meant —a *casual, hollow, sounding* success! I could multiply such examples, but that I am sure the reader will easily supply them himself; and they show sufficiently that Shakespear was not (as he is often represented) a loose or clumsy writer. The bold, happy texture of his style, in which every word is prominent, and yet cannot be torn from its place without violence, any more than a limb from the body, is (one should think) the result either of vigilant pains-taking, or of unerring, intuitive perception, and not the mark of crude conceptions, or "the random, blindfold blows of ignorance."

There cannot be a greater contradiction to the common prejudice that "Genius is naturally a truant and a vagabond," than the astonishing and (on this hypothesis) unaccountable number of *chef-d'œuvres* left behind them by the Old Masters. The stream of their invention supplies the taste of successive generations like a river: they furnish a hundred Galleries, and preclude competition, not more by the excellence than by the extent of their performances. Take Raphael and Rubens for instance. There are works of theirs in single Collections enough to occupy a long and laborious life, and yet their works are spread through all the Collections of Europe. They seem to have cost them no more labour than if they "had drawn in their breath and puffed it forth again." But we know that they made drawings, studies, sketches of all the principal of these, with the care and caution of the merest tyros in the art; and they remain equal proofs of their capacity and diligence. The *Cartoons* of Raphael alone might have employed many years, and made a life of illustrious labour, though they look as if they had been struck off at a blow, and are not a tenth part of what he produced in his short but bright career. Titian and Michael Angelo lived longer; but they worked as hard and did as well. Shall we bring in competition with examples like these some trashy caricaturist or idle dauber, who has no sense of the infinite resources of nature or art, nor consequently any power to employ himself upon them for any length of time or to any purpose, to prove that genius and regular industry are incompatible qualities?

In my opinion, the very superiority of the works of the great painters (instead of being a bar to) accounts for their multiplicity. Power is pleasure; and pleasure sweetens pain. A fine poet thus describes the effect of the sight of nature on his mind:

——"The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,

> Their colours and their forms were then to me
> An appetite, a feeling, and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm
> By thought supplied, or any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye."

So the forms of nature, or the human form divine, stood before the great artists of old, nor required any other stimulus to lead the eye to survey, or the hand to embody them, than the pleasure derived from the inspiration of the subject, and "propulsive force" of the mimic creation. The grandeur of their works was an argument with them, not to stop short, but to proceed. They could have no higher excitement or satisfaction than in the exercise of their art and endless generation of truth and beauty. Success prompts to exertion; and habit facilitates success. It is idle to suppose we can exhaust nature; and the more we employ our own faculties, the more we strengthen them and enrich our stores of observation and invention. The more we do, the more we *can* do. Not indeed if we *get our ideas out of our own heads*—that stock is soon exhausted, and we recur to tiresome, vapid imitations of ourselves. But this is the difference between real and mock talent, between genius and affectation. Nature is not limited, nor does it become effete, like our conceit and vanity. The closer we examine it, the more it refines upon us; it expands as we enlarge and shift our view; it "grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength." The subjects are endless; and our capacity is invigorated as it is called out by occasion and necessity. He who does nothing, renders himself incapable of doing any thing; but while we are executing any work, we are preparing and qualifying ourselves to undertake another. The principles are the same in all nature; and we understand them better, as we verify them by experience and practice. It is not as if there was a given number of subjects to work upon, or a set of *innate* or preconceived ideas in our minds, which we encroached upon with every new design; the subjects, as I said before, are endless, and we acquire ideas by imparting them. Our expenditure of intellectual wealth makes us rich: we can only be liberal as we have previously accumulated the means. By lying idle, as by standing still, we are confined to the same trite, narrow round of topics: by continuing our efforts, as by moving forwards in a road, we extend our views, and discover continually new tracts of country. Genius, like humanity, rusts for want of use.

Habit also gives promptness; and the soul of dispatch is decision. One man may write a book or paint a picture, while another is deliberating about the plan or the title-page. The great painters were able to do so much, because they knew exactly what they meant to do, and how to set about it. They were thorough-bred workmen, and were not learning their art while they were exercising it. We can do a great deal in a short time if we only know how. Thus an author may become very voluminous, who only employs an hour or two in a day in study. If he has once obtained, by habit and reflection, a use of his pen with plenty of materials to work upon, the pages vanish before him. The time lost is in beginning, or in stopping after we have begun. If we only go forwards with spirit and confidence, we shall soon arrive at the end of our journey. A practised writer ought never to hesitate for a sentence from the moment he sets pen to paper, or think about the course he is to take. He must trust to his previous knowledge of the subject and to his immediate impulses, and he will get to the close of his task without accidents or loss of time. I can easily understand how the old divines and controversialists produced their folios: I could write folios myself, if I rose early and sat up late at this kind of occupation. But I confess I should be soon tired of it, besides wearying the reader.

In one sense, art is long and life is short. In another sense, this aphorism is not true. The best of us are idle half our time. It is wonderful how much is done in a short space, provided we set about it properly, and give our minds wholly to it. Let any one devote himself to any art or science ever so strenuously, and he will still have leisure to make considerable progress in half a dozen other acquirements. Leonardo da Vinci was a mathematician, a musician, a poet, and an anatomist, besides being one of the greatest painters of his age. The Prince of Painters was a courtier, a lover, and fond of dress and company. Michael Angelo was a prodigy of versatility of talent—a writer of Son nets (which Wordsworth has thought worth translating) and the friend of Dante. Salvator was a lutenist and a satirist. Titian was an elegant letter-writer, and a finished gentleman. Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses are more polished and classical even than any of his pictures. Let a man do all he can in any one branch of study, he must either exhaust himself and doze over it, or vary his pursuit, or else lie idle. All our real labour lies in a nut-shell. The mind makes, at some period or other, one Herculean effort, and the rest is mechanical. We have to climb a steep and narrow precipice at first; but after that, the way is broad and easy, where we may drive several accomplishments abreast. Men should have one principal pursuit, which may be both agreeably and advantageously diversified with other lighter ones, as the subordinate parts of a picture may be managed so as to give effect to the centre group. It has been observed by a sensible man,* that the having a regular occupation or professional duties to attend to is no excuse for putting forth an inelegant or inaccurate work; for a habit of industry braces and strengthens the mind, and enables it to wield its energies with additional ease and steadier purpose. Were I allowed to instance in myself, if what I write at present is worth nothing, at least it costs me nothing. But it cost me a great deal twenty years ago. I have added little to my stock since then, and taken little from it. I "unfold the book and volume of the brain," and transcribe the characters I see there as mechanically as any one might copy the letters in a sampler. I do not say they came there mechanically—I transfer them to the paper mechanically. After eight or ten years' hard study, an author (at least) may go to sleep.

I do not conceive rapidity of execution necessarily implies slovenliness or crudeness. On the contrary, I believe it is often productive both of sharpness and freedom. The eagerness of composition strikes out sparkles of fancy, and runs the thoughts more naturally and closely into one another. There may be less formal method, but there is more life and spirit and truth. In the play and agitation of the mind, it runs over, and we dally with the subject, as the glass-blower rapidly shapes the vitreous fluid. A number of new thoughts rise up spontaneously, and they come in the proper places, because they arise from the occasion. They are also sure to partake of the warmth and vividness of that ebullition of mind, from which they spring. *Spiritus precipitandus est.* In these sort of voluntaries in composition, the thoughts are worked up to a state of projection: the grasp of the subject, the presence of mind, the flow of expression must be something akin to *extempore* speaking; or perhaps such bold but finished draughts may be compared to *fresco* paintings, which imply a life of study and great previous preparation, but of which the execution is momentary and irrevocable. I will add a single remark on a point that has been much disputed. Mr. Cobbett lays it down that the first word that occurs is always the best. I would venture to differ from so great an authority. Mr. Cobbett himself indeed writes as easily and as well as he talks; but he perhaps is hardly a rule for others without his practice and without his ability. In the hurry of composition three or four words may present themselves, one on the back of the other, and the last may be the best and right one. I grant thus much, that it is in vain to seek for the word we want, or endeavour to get at it second-hand, or as a paraphrase on some other word—it must come of itself, or arise out of an immediate impression or lively intuition of the subject; that is, the proper word must be suggested immediately by the thought, but it need not be presented as soon as called for. It is the same in trying to recollect the names of places, persons, &c., where we cannot force our memory; they must come of themselves by natural association, as it were; but they may occur to us when we least think of it, owing to some casual circumstance or link of connection, and long after we have given up the search. Proper expressions rise to the surface from the heat and fermentation of the mind, like bubbles on an agitated stream. It is this which produces a clear and sparkling style.

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* The Rev. W. Shepherd of Gateacre, in the Preface to his Life of Poggio.

In painting, great execution supplies the place of high finishing. A few vigorous touches, properly and rapidly disposed, will often give more of the appearance and texture (even) of natural objects than the most heavy and laborious details. But this masterly style of execution is very different from coarse daubing. I do not think, however, that the pains or polish an artist bestows upon his works necessarily interferes with their number. He only grows more enamoured of his task, proportionably patient, indefatigable, and devotes more of the day to study. The time we lose is not in overdoing what we are about; but in doing nothing. Rubens had great facility of execution, and seldom went into the details. Yet Raphael, whose oil-pictures were exact and laboured, achieved, according to the length of time he lived, very nearly as much as he. In filling up the parts of his pictures, and giving them the last perfection they were capable of, he filled up his leisure hours, which otherwise would have lain idle on his hands. I have sometimes accounted for the slow progress of certain artists from the unfinished state in which they have left their works at last. These were evidently done by fits and throes—there was no appearance of continuous labour—one figure had been thrown in at a venture, and then another; and in the intervals between these convulsive and random efforts, more time had been wasted than could have been spent in working up each individual figure on the sure principles of art, and by a careful inspection of nature, to the utmost point of practicable perfection.

Some persons are afraid of their own works; and having made one or two successful efforts, attempt nothing ever after. They stand still midway in the road to fame, from being startled at the shadow of their own reputation. This is a needless alarm. If what they have already done possesses real power, this will increase with exercise; if it has not this power, it is not sufficient to ensure them lasting fame. Such delicate pretenders tremble on the brink of *ideal* perfection, like dew-drops on the edge of flowers; and are fascinated, like so many Narcissuses, with the image of themselves, reflected from the public admiration. It is seldom indeed, that this cautious repose will answer its end. While seeking to sustain our reputation at the height, we are forgotten. Shakespear gave different advice, and himself acted upon it.

> —"Perseverance, dear my lord,
> Keeps honour bright. To have done, is to hang

Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail,
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way,
For honour travels in a strait so narrow,
Where one but goes abreast. Keep then the path;
For emulation hath a thousand sons,
That one by one pursue. If you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forth-right,
Like to an enter'd tide, they all rush by,
And leave you hindmost:—
Or like a gallant horse, fall'n in first rank,
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O'er-run and trampled. Then what they do in present,
Though less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours:
For time is like a fashionable host,
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand,
And with his arms outstretch'd as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer. Welcome ever smiles,
And farewell goes out sighing. O let not virtue seek
Remuneration for the thing it was; for beauty, wit,
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating Time.
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,
That all with one consent praise new-born gauds,
Though they are made and moulded of things past;
And give to dust that is a little gilt
More laud than gilt o'er dusted.
The present eye praises the present object."

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

I cannot very well conceive how it is that some writers (even of taste and genius) spend whole years in mere corrections for the press, as it were—in polishing a line or adjusting a comma. They take long to consider, exactly as there is nothing worth the trouble of a moment's thought; and the more they deliberate, the farther they are from deciding: for their fastidiousness increases with the indulgence of it, nor is there any real ground for preference. They are in the situation of *Ned Softly* in the TATLER, who was a whole morning debating whether a line of poetical epistle should run—

"You sing your song with so much art;"

or,

> "Your song you sing with so much art."

These are points that it is impossible ever to come to a determination about; and it is only a proof of a little mind ever to have entertained the question at all.

There is a class of persons whose minds seem to move in an element of littleness; or rather, that are entangled in trifling difficulties, and incapable of extricating themselves from them. There was a remarkable instance of this improgressive, ineffectual, restless activity of temper in a late celebrated and very ingenious landscape-painter. "Never ending, still beginning," his mind seemed entirely made up of points and fractions, nor could he by any means arrive at a conclusion or a valuable whole. He made it his boast that he never sat with his hands before him, and yet he never did anything. His powers and his time were frittered away in an importunate, uneasy, fidgetty attention to little things. The first picture he ever painted (when a mere boy) was a copy of his father's house; and he began it by counting the number of bricks in the front upwards and lengthways, and then made a scale of them on his canvas. This literal style and mode of study stuck to him to the last. He was placed under Wilson, whose example (if anything could) might have cured him of this pettiness of conception; but nature prevailed, as it almost always does. To take pains to no purpose, seemed to be his motto, and the delight of his life. He left (when he died, not long ago) heaps of canvasses with elaborately finished pencil outlines on them, and with perhaps a little dead-colouring added here and there. In this state they were thrown aside, as if he grew tired of his occupation the instant it gave a promise of turning to account, and his whole object in the pursuit of art was to erect scaffoldings. The same intense interest in the most frivolous things extended to the common concerns of life, to the arranging of his letters, the labelling of his books, and the inventory of his wardrobe. Yet he was a man of sense, who saw the folly and the waste of time in all this, and could warn others against it. The perceiving our own weaknesses enables us to give others excellent advice, but it does not teach us to reform them ourselves. "Physician, heal thyself!"

is the hardest lesson to follow. Nobody knew better than our artist that repose is necessary to great efforts, and that he who is never idle, labours in vain!

Another error is to spend one's life in procrastination and preparations for the future. Persons of this turn of mind stop at the threshold of art, and accumulate the means of improvement, till they obstruct their progress to the end. They are always putting off the evil day, and excuse themselves for doing nothing by commencing some new and indispensable course of study. Their projects are magnificent, but remote, and require years to complete or to put them in execution. Fame is seen in the horizon, and flies before them. Like the recreant boastful knight in Spenser, they turn their backs on their competitors to make a great career, but never return to the charge. They make themselves masters of anatomy, of drawing, of perspective: they collect prints, casts, medallions, make studies of heads, of hands, of the bones, the muscles; copy pictures; visit Italy, Greece, and return as they went. They fulfil the proverb, "When you are at Rome, you must do as those at Rome do." This circuitous, erratic pursuit of art can come to no good. It is only an apology for idleness and vanity. Foreign travel especially makes men pedants, not artists. What we seek, we must find at home, or nowhere. The way to do great things is to set about something, and he who cannot find resources in himself or in his own painting-room, will perform the Grand Tour, or go through the circle of the arts and sciences, and end just where he began!

The same remarks that have been here urged with respect to an application to the study of art, will in a great measure (though not in every particular,) apply to an attention to business: I mean, that exertion will generally follow success and opportunity in the one, as it does confidence and talent in the other. Give a man a motive to work, and he will work. A lawyer who is regularly feed, seldom neglects to look over his briefs: the more business, the more industry. The stress laid upon early rising is preposterous. If we have any thing to do when we get up, we shall not lie in bed, to a certainty. Thomson the poet was found late in bed by Dr. Burney, and asked why he had not risen earlier. The Scotchman wisely answered. "I had no motive, young man!" What, indeed, had he to do after writing the SEASONS, but to dream out the rest of his existence, or employ it in writing the CASTLE OF INDOLENCE!*

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* School-boys attend to their tasks as soon as they acquire a relish for study, and they apply to that for which they find they have a capacity. If a boy shows no inclination for the Latin tongue, it is a sign he has not a turn for learning languages. Yet he dances well. Give up the thought of making a scholar of him, and bring him up to be a dancing-master!

ESSAY XIV.

On the Old Age of Artists.

"And their old age is beautiful and free."
WORDSWORTH.

MR. NOLLEKENS died the other day at the age of eighty, and left 240,000 pounds behind him, and the name of one of our best English sculptors. There was a great scramble among the legatees, a codicil to a will with large bequests unsigned, and that last triumph of the dead or dying over those who survive—hopes raised and defeated without a possibility of retaliation, or the smallest use in complaint. The King was at first said to be left residuary legatee. This would have been a fine instance of romantic and gratuitous homage to Majesty, in a man who all his life-time could never be made to comprehend the abstract idea of the distinction of ranks or even of persons. He would go up to the Duke of York or Prince of Wales (in spite of warning), take them familiarly by the button like common acquaintance, ask them *how their father did;* and express pleasure at hearing he was well, saying, "when he was gone, we should never get such another." He once, when the old king was sitting to him for his bust, fairly stuck a pair of compasses into his nose to measure the distance from the upper lip to the forehead, as if he had been measuring a block of marble. His late Majesty laughed heartily at this, and was amused to find that there was a person in the world, ignorant of the vast interval which separated him from every other man. Nollekens, with all his loyalty, merely liked the man, and cared nothing about the KING (which was one of those *mixed modes,* as Mr. Locke calls them, of which he had no more idea than if he had been one of the cream-coloured horses)—handled him like so much common clay, and had no other notion of the matter, but that it was his business to make the best bust of him he possibly could, and to set about it in the regular way. There was something in this plainness and simplicity that savoured perhaps of the hardness and dryness of his art, and of his own peculiar severity of manner. He conceived that one man's head differed from another's only as it was a better or worse subject for modelling; that a bad bust was not made into a good one by being stuck upon a pedestal, or by any painting or varnishing; and that by whatever name he was called, "*a man's a man for a' that.*" A sculptor's ideas must, I should guess, be somewhat rigid and inflexible, like the materials in which he works. Besides, Nollekens's style was comparatively hard and edgy. He had as much truth and character, but none of the polished graces or transparent softness of Chantrey. He had more of the rough, plain, downright honesty of his art. It seemed to be his character. Mr. Northcote was once complimenting him on his acknowledged superiority—"Ay, *you* made the best busts of any body!" "I don't know about that," said the other, his eyes (though their orbs were quenched,) smiling with a gleam of smothered delight—"I only know I always tried to make them as like as I could."

I saw this eminent and singular person one morning in Mr. Northcote's painting-room. He had then been for some time nearly blind, and had been obliged to lay aside the exercise of his profession; but he still took a pleasure in designing groups, and in giving directions to others for executing them. He and Northcote made a remarkable pair. He sat down on a low stool (from being rather fatigued) rested with both hands on a stick, as if he clung to the solid and tangible; had an habitual twitch in his limbs and motions, as if catching himself in the act of going too far in chiselling a lip or a dimple in a chin; was *bolt*-upright, with features hard and square, but finely cut, a hooked nose, thin lips, an indented forehead; and the defect in his sight completed his resemblance to one of his own masterly busts. He seemed, by time and labour, to "have *wrought* himself to stone." Northcote stood by his side—all air and spirit, stooping down to speak to him. The painter was in a loose morning-gown, with his back to the light; his face was like a pale fine piece of co louring; and his eye came out and glanced through the twilight of the past, like an old eagle looking from its eyrie in the clouds. In a moment they had lighted from the top of Mount Cenis in the Vatican—

> " As when a vulture on Imaus bred
> Flies tow'rds the springs
> Of Ganges and Hydaspes, Indian streams,"

these two fine old men lighted with winged thoughts on the banks of the Tiber, and there bathed and drank of the spirit of their youth. They talked of Titian and Bernini; and Northcote mentioned, that when Roubilliac came back from Rome, after seeing the works of the latter, and went to look at his own in Westminster Abbey, he said, "By G–d, they looked like tobacco-pipes."

They then recalled a number of anecdotes of Day (a fellow-student of theirs,) of Barry and Fuseli, Sir Joshua and Burke and Johnson, were talked of. The names of these great sons of memory were in the room, and they almost seemed to answer to them—Genius and Fame flung a spell into the air,

> "And by the force of blear illusion,
> Had drawn me on to my confusion,"

had I not been long ere this *siren-proof!* It is delightful, though painful, to hear two veterans in art thus talking over the adventures and studies of their youth, when one feels that they are not quite mortal, that they have one imperishable part about them, and that they are conscious, as they approach the farthest verge of humanity in friendly intercourse and tranquil decay, that they have done something that will live after them. The consolations of religion apart, this is perhaps the only salve that takes out the sting of that sore evil, Death; and by lessening the impatience and alarm at his approach, often tempts him to prolong the term of his absence.

It has been remarked that artists, or at least academicians, live long. It is but a short while ago that Northcote, Nollekens, West, Flaxman, Cosway, and Fuseli, were all living at the same time in good health and spirits, without any diminution of faculties, all of them having long past their grand climacteric, and attained to the highest reputation in their several departments. From these striking examples, the diploma of a Royal Academician seems to be a grant of a longer lease of life, among its other advantages. In fact, it is tantamount to the conferring a certain reputation in his profession and a competence on any man, and thus supplies the wants of the body, and sets his mind at ease. Artists in general, (poor devils!) I am afraid, are not a long-lived race. They break up commonly about forty, their spirits giving way with the disappointment of their hopes of excellence, or the want of encouragement for that which they have attained, their plans disconcerted, and their affairs irretrievable; and in this state of mortification and embarrassment (more or less prolonged and aggravated) they are either starved or else drink themselves to death. But your Academician is quite a different person. He "bears a charmed life, that must not yield" to duns, or critics, or patrons. He is free of Parnassus, and claims all the immunities of fame in his life-time. He has but to paint (as the sun has but to shine) to baffle envious maligners. He has but to send his pictures to the Exhibition at Somerset-House, in order to have them hung up: he has but to dine once a year with the Academy, the Nobility, the Cabinet-Ministers, and the Members of the Royal Family, in order not to want a dinner all the rest of the year. Shall hunger come near the man that has feasted with princes—shall a bailiff tap the shoulder on which a Marquis has familiarly leaned, that has been dubbed with knighthood? No, even "the fell Serjeant Death" stands as it were aloof; and he enjoys a kind of premature immortality in recorded honours and endless labours. Oh! what golden hours are his! In the short days of winter he husbands time; the long evenings of summer still find him employed! He paints on, and takes no thought for to-morrow. All is right in that respect. His bills are regularly paid; his drafts are duly honoured. He has exercise for his body, employment for his mind in his profession, and without ever stirring out of his painting-room. He studies as much of other things as he pleases. He goes into the best company, or talks with his sitters—attends at the Academy Meetings, and enters into their intrigues and cabals, or stays at home, and enjoys the *otium cum dignitate*. If he is fond of reputation, Fame watches him at work, and weaves a woof, like Iris, over his head—if he is fond of money, Plutus digs a mine under his feet. Whatever he touches becomes gold. He is paid half-price before he begins; and commissions pour in upon commissions. His portraits are like, and his historical pieces fine; for to question the talents or success of a Royal Academician is to betray your own want of taste. Or if his pictures are not quite approved, he is an agreeable man, and converses well. Or he is a person of elegant accomplishments. dresses well, and is an ornament to a private circle. A man is not an Academician for nothing. "His life spins round on its soft axle;" and in the lapse of uninterrupted thoughts and pleasing avocations, without any of the *wear and tear* of the world or of business, there seems no reason why it should not run smoothly on to its last sand!

Of all the Academicians, the painters, or persons I have ever known, Mr. Northcote is the most to my taste. It may be said of him truly,

> "Age cannot wither, nor custom stale
> His infinite variety."

Indeed, it is not possible he should become tedious, since, even if he repeats the same thing, it appears quite new from his manner, that breathes new life into it, and from his eye, that is as fresh as the morning. How you hate any one who tells the same story or anticipates a remark of his—it seems so coarse and vulgar, so dry and inanimate! There is something like injustice in this preference—but no! it is a tribute to the spirit that is in the man. Mr. Northcote's manner is completely *extempore*. It is just the reverse of Mr. Canning's oratory. All his thoughts come upon him unawares, and for this reason they surprise and delight you, because they have evidently the same effect upon his own mind. There is the same unconsciousness in his conversation that has been pointed out in Shakespear's dialogues; or you are startled with one observation after another, as when the mist gradually withdraws from a landscape and unfolds a number of objects one by one. His figure is small, shadowy, emaciated; but you think only of his face, which is fine and expressive. His body is out of the question. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the *naiveté*, and unaffected, but delightful ease of the way in which he goes on—now touching upon a picture—now looking for his snuff-box—now alluding to some book he has been reading—now returning to his favourite art. He seems just as if he was by himself or in the company of his own thoughts, and makes you feel quite at home. If it is a Member of Parliament, or a beautiful woman, or a child, or a young artist that drops in, it makes no difference; he enters into conversation with them in the same unconstrained manner, as if they were inmates in his family. Sometimes you find him sitting on the floor, like a school-boy at play, turning over a set of old prints; and I was pleased to hear him say the other day, coming to one of some men putting off in a boat from a shipwreck—"*That* is the grandest and most original thing I ever did!" This was not egotism, but had all the beauty of truth and sincerity. The print was indeed a noble and spirited design. The circumstance from which it was taken happened to Captain Englefield and his crew. He told Northcote the story, sat for his own head, and brought the men from Wapping to sit for theirs; and these he had arranged into a formal composition, till one Jeffrey, a conceited but clever artist of that day, called in upon him and said, "Oh! that common-place thing will never do, it is like West; you should throw them into an action something like this."—Accordingly, the head of the boat was reared up like a sea-horse riding the waves, and the elements put into commotion; and when the painter looked at it the last thing as he went out of his room in the dusk of the evening, he said that "it frightened him." He retained the expression in the faces of the men nearly as they sat to him. It is very fine, and truly English; and being natural, it was easily made into history. There is a portrait of a young gentleman striving to get into the boat, while the crew are pushing him off with their oars; but at last he prevailed with them by his perseverance and entreaties to be taken in. They had only time to throw a bag of biscuits into the boat before the ship went down; which they divided into a biscuit a day for each man, dipping them into water which they collected by holding up their handkerchiefs in the rain and squeezing it into a bottle They were out sixteen days in the Atlantic, and got ashore at some place in Spain, where the great difficulty was to prevent them from eating too much at once, so as to recover gradually. Captain Englefield observed that he suffered more afterwards than at the time—that he had horrid dreams of falling down precipices for a long while after—that in the boat they told merry stories, and kept up one another's spirits as well as they could, and on some complaint being made of their distressed situation, the young gentleman who had been admitted into their crew remarked, "Nay, we are not so badly off neither, we are not come to *eating* one another yet!"—Thus, whatever is the subject, the scene is revived in Mr. Northcote's mind, and every circumstance brought before you without affectation or effort, just as it happened. It might be called *picture-talking*. He has always some apt allusion or anecdote. A young engraver came into his room the other day, with a print which he had put into the crown of his hat, in order not to crumple it, and he said it had been nearly blown away several times in passing along the street. "You put me in mind," said Northcote, "of a bird-catcher at Plymouth, who used to put the birds he had caught into his hat to bring them home, and one day meeting my father in the road, he pulled off his hat to make him a low bow, and all the birds flew away!" Sometimes Mr. Northcote gets to the top of a ladder to paint a palm-tree or to finish a sky in one of his pictures; and in this situation he listens very attentively to any thing you tell him. I was once mentioning some strange inconsistencies of our modern poets: and on coming to one that exceeded the rest, he descended the steps of the ladder one by one, laid his pallet and brushes deliberately on the ground, and coming up to me, said—"You don't say so, it's the very thing I should have supposed of them: yet these are the men that speak against Pope and Dryden." Never any sarcasms were so fine, so cutting, so careless as his. The grossest things from his lips seem an essence of refinement: the most refined became more so than ever. Hear him talk of Pope's Epistle to Jervas, and repeat the lines—

"Yet should the Graces all thy figures place,
And breathe an air divine on every face;
Yet should the Muses bid my numbers roll
Strong as their charms, and gentle as their soul,

> With Zeuxis' Helen thy Bridgewater vie,
> And these be sung till Granville's Myra die:
> Alas! how little from the grave we claim;
> Thou but preserv'st a face, and I a name."

Or let him speak of Boccacio and his story of Isabella and her pot of basil, in which she kept her lover's head and watered it with her tears, "and how it grew, and it grew, and it grew," and you see his own eyes glisten, and the leaves of the basil-tree tremble to his faltering accents!

Mr. Fuseli's conversation is more striking and extravagant, but less pleasing and natural than Mr. Northcote's. He deals in paradoxes and caricatures. He talks allegories and personifications, as he paints them. You are sensible of effort without any repose—no careless pleasantry—no traits of character or touches from nature—every thing is laboured or overdone. His ideas are gnarled, hard, and distorted, like his features—his theories stalking and straddle-legged, like his gait—his projects aspiring and gigantic, like his gestures—his performance uncouth and dwarfish, like his person. His pictures are also like himself, with eye-balls of stone stuck in rims of tin, and muscles twisted together like ropes or wires. Yet Fuseli is undoubtedly a man of genius, and capable of the most wild and grotesque combinations of fancy. It is a pity that he ever applied himself to painting, which must always be reduced to the test of the senses. He is a little like Dante or Ariosto perhaps; but no more like Michael Angelo, Raphael, or Correggio, than I am. Nature, he complains, puts him out. Yet he can laugh at artists who "paint ladies with iron lap-dogs;" and he describes the great masters of old in words and images full of truth, and glancing from a pen or tongue of fire. I conceive any person would be more struck with Mr. Fuseli at first sight, but would wish to visit Mr. Northcote oftener. There is a bold and startling outline in his style of talking, but not the delicate finishing or bland tone that there is in that of the latter. Whatever there is harsh or repulsive about him is, however, in a great degree carried off by his animated foreign accent and broken English, which give character where there is none, and soften its asperities where it is too abrupt and violent.

Compared to either of these artists, Mr. West (the late President of the Royal Academy) was a thoroughly mechanical and *common-place* person—a man "of no mark or likelihood." He too was small, thin, but with regular well-formed features, and a precise, sedate, self-satisfied air. This, in part, arose from the conviction in his own mind that he was the greatest painter (and consequently the greatest man) in the world; kings and nobles were common every-day folks, while there was but one West in the many-peopled globe. If there was any one individual with whom he was inclined to share the palm of undivided superiority, it was with Bonaparte. When Mr. West had painted a picture, he thought it was perfect. He had no idea of any thing in the art but rules, and these he exactly conformed to; so that, according to his theory, what he did was quite right. He conceived of painting as a mechanical or scientific process, and had no more doubt of a face or a group in one of his high ideal compositions being what it ought to be, than a carpenter has that he has drawn a line straight with a ruler and a piece of chalk, or than a mathematician has that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones.

When Mr. West walked through his Gallery, the result of fifty years' labour, he saw nothing, either on the right or the left, to be added or taken away. The account he gave of his own pictures, which might seem like ostentation or rhodomontade, had a sincere and infantine simplicity in it. When some one spoke of his *St. Paul shaking off the serpent from his arm* (at Greenwich Hospital, I believe,) he said, "A little burst of genius, sir!" West was one of those happy mortals who had not an idea of any thing beyond himself or his own actual powers and knowledge. The whole art with him consisted in measuring the distance from the foot to the knee, in counting the number of muscles in the calf of the leg, in dividing his subject into three groups, in lifting up the eyebrows to express pity or wonder, and in contracting them to express anger or contempt. Looking at a picture of Rubens's, which he had in his possession, he said, with great indifference, "What a pity that this man wanted expression!" This natural self-complacency might be strengthened by collateral circumstances of birth and religion. West, as a native of America, might be supposed to own no superior in the commonwealth of art: as a Quaker, he smiled with sectarian self-sufficiency at the objections that were made to his theory or practice in painting. He lived long in the firm persuasion of being one of the elect among the sons of Fame, and went to his final rest in the arms of Immortality! Happy error! Enviable old man!

Flaxman is another living and eminent artist, who is distinguished by success in his profession and by a prolonged and active old age. He is diminutive in person, like the others. I know little of him, but that he is an elegant sculptor, and a profound mystic. This last is a character common to many other artists in our days—Loutherbourg, Cosway, Blake, Sharp, Varley, &c.—who seem to relieve the literalness of their professional studies by voluntary excursions into the regions of the preternatural, pass their time between sleeping and waking, and whose ideas are like a stormy night, with the clouds driven rapidly across, and the blue sky and stars gleaming between!

Cosway is the last of these I shall mention. At that name I pause, and must be excused if I consecrate to him a frail memorial in my careless manner; for he was Fancy's child. What a fairy palace was his of specimens of art, antiquarianism, and *vertu*, jumbled all together in the richest disorder, dusty, shadowy, obscure, with much left to the imagination (how different from the finical, polished, petty, modernized air of some Collections we have seen!) and with copies of the Old Masters, cracked and damaged, which he touched and retouched with his own hand, and yet swore they were the genuine, the pure originals. All other collectors are fools to him: they go about with painful anxiety to find out the realities:—he *said* he had them—and in a moment made them of the breath of his nostrils and of the fumes of a lively imagination. His was the crucifix that Abelard prayed to—a lock of Eloisa's hair—the dagger with which Felton stabbed the Duke of Buckingham—the first finished sketch of the Jocunda—Titian's large colossal profile of Peter Aretine—a mummy of an Egyptian king—a feather of a phœnix—a piece of Noah's Ark. Were the articles authentic? What matter?—his faith in them was true. He was gifted with a *second-sight* in such matters: he believed whatever was incredible Fancy bore sway in him; and so vivid were his impressions, that they included the substances of things in them. The agreeable and the true with him were one. He believed in Swedenborgianism—he believed in animal magnetism—he had conversed with more than one person of the Trinity—he could talk with his lady at Mantua through some fine vehicle of sense, as we speak to a servant down-stairs through a conduit-pipe. Richard Cosway was not the man to flinch from an *ideal* proposition. Once, at an Academy dinner, when some question was made whether the story of Lambert's Leap was true, he started up, and said it was; for he was the person that performed it:—he once assured me that the knee-pan of King James I., in the ceiling at Whitehall, was nine feet across (he had measured it in concert with Mr. Cipriani, who was repairing the figures)—he could read in the Book of the Revelations without spectacles, and foretold the return of Bonaparte from Elba—and from St. Helena! His wife, the most ladylike of Englishwomen, being asked in Paris what sort of a man her husband was, made answer—"*Toujours riant, toujours gai.*" This was his character. He must have been of French extraction. His soul appeared to possess the life of a bird; and such was the jauntiness of his air and manner, that to see him sit to have his half-boots laced on, you would fancy (by the help of a figure) that, instead of a little withered elderly gentleman, it was Venus attired by the Graces. His miniatures and whole-length drawings were not merely fashionable—they were fashion itself. His imitations of Michael Angelo were not the thing. When more than ninety, he retired from his profession, and used to hold up the palsied hand that had painted lords and ladies for upwards of sixty years, and smile, with unabated good-humour, at the vanity of human wishes. Take him with all his faults and follies, we scarce "shall look upon his like again!"

Why should such characters ever die? It seems hard upon them and us? Care fixes no sting in their hearts, and their persons "present no mark to the foe-man." Death in them seizes upon living shadows. They scarce consume vital air: their gross functions have been long at an end—they live but to paint, to talk or think. Is it that the vice of age, the miser's fault, gnaws them? Many of them are not afraid of death, but of coming to want; and having begun in poverty, are haunted with the idea that they shall end in it, and so are willing to die—*to save charges.* Otherwise, they might linger on forever, and "defy **augury**!"

ESSAY XV.

On Egotism.

It is mentioned in the Life of Salvator Rosa, that on the occasion of an altar-piece of his being exhibited at Rome, in the triumph of the moment, he compared himself to Michael Angelo, and spoke against Raphael, calling him *hard*, *dry*, &c. Both these were fatal symptoms for the ultimate success of the work: the picture was in fact afterwards severely censured, so as to cause him much uneasiness; and he passed a great part of his life in quarrelling with the world for admiring his landscapes, which were truly excellent, and for not admiring his historical pieces, which were full of defects. Salvator wanted self-knowledge, and that respect for others which is both a cause and consequence of it. Like many more, he mistook the violent and irritable workings of self-will (in a wrong direction) for the impulse of genius, and his insensibility to the vast superiority of others for a proof of his equality with them.

In the first place, nothing augurs worse for any one's pretensions to the highest rank of excellence than his making free with those of others. He who boldly and unreservedly places himself on a level with the *mighty dead*, shows a want of sentiment—the only thing that can ensure immortality to his own works. When we forestal the judgment of posterity, it is because we are not confident of it. A mind that brings all others into a line with its own naked or assumed merits, that sees all objects in the foreground as it were, that does not regard the lofty monuments of genius through the atmosphere of fame, is coarse, crude, and repulsive as a picture without aerial perspective. Time, like distance, spreads a haze and a glory round all things. Not to perceive this, is to want a sense, is to be without imagination. Yet there are those who strut in their own self-opinion, and deck themselves out in the plumes of fancied self-importance as if they were crowned with laurel by Apollo's own hand. There was nothing in common between Salvator and Michael Angelo: otherwise, the consciousness of the power with which he had to contend would have over-awed and struck him dumb; so that the very familiarity of his approaches proved (as much as any thing else) the immense distance placed between them. Painters alone seem to have a trick of putting themselves on an equal footing with the greatest of their predecessors, of advancing, on the sole strength of their vanity and presumption, to the highest seats in the Temple of Fame, of talking of themselves and Raphael and Michael Angelo in the same breath! What should we think of a poet who should publish to the world, or give a broad hint in private, that he conceived himself fully on a par with Homer or Milton or Shakespear? It would be too much for a friend to say so of him. But artists suffer their friends to puff them in the true "King Cambyses' vein" without blushing. Is it that they are often men without a liberal education, who have no notion of any thing that does not come under their immediate observation, and who accordingly prefer the living to the dead, and themselves to all the rest of the world? Or that there is something in the nature of the profession itself, fixing the view on a particular point of time, and not linking the present either with the past or future?

Again, Salvator's disregard for Raphael, instead of inspiring him with any thing like "vain and self-conceit," ought to have taught him the greatest diffidence in himself. Instead of anticipating a triumph over Raphael from this circumstance, he might have foreseen it in the sure source of his mortification and defeat. The public looked to find in *his* pictures what he did not see in Raphael and were necessarily disappointed. He could hardly be expected to produce that which, when produced and set before him, he did not feel or understand. The genius for a particular thing does not imply taste in general or for other things, but it assuredly pre-supposes a taste or feeling for that particular thing. Salvator was so much offended with the *dryness, hardness*, &c. of Raphael, only because he was not struck, that is, did not sympathize with the divine mind within. If he had, he would have bowed as at a shrine, in spite of the homeliness or finicalness of the covering. Let no man build himself a spurious self-esteem on his contempt or indifference for acknowledged excellence. He will in the end pay dear for a momentary delusion: for the world will sooner or later discover those deficiencies in him, which render him insensible to all merits but his own.

Of all modes of acquiring distinction, and, as it were, "getting the start of the majestic world," the most absurd as well as disgusting is that of setting aside the claims of others in the lump, and holding out our own particular excellence or pursuit as the only one worth attending to. We thus set ourselves up as the standard of perfection, and treat every thing else that diverges from that standard as beneath our notice. At this rate, a contempt for any thing and a superiority to it are synonymous. It is a cheap and a short way of showing that we possess all excellence within ourselves, to deny the use or merit of all those qualifications that do not belong to us. According to such a mode of computation, it would appear that our value is to be estimated not by the number of acquirements that we *do* possess, but of those in which we are deficient and to which we are insensible:—so that we can at any time supply the place of wisdom and skill by a due proportion of ignorance, affectation, and conceit. If so, the dullest fellow, with impudence enough to despise what he does not understand, will always be the brightest genius and the greatest man. If stupidity is to be a substitute for taste, knowledge, and genius, any one may dogmatize and play the critic on this ground. We may easily make a monopoly of talent, if the torpedo-touch of our callous and wilful indifference is to neutralize all other pretensions. We have only to deny the advantages of others to make them our own: illiberality will carve out the way to pre-eminence much better than toil or study or quickness of parts; and by narrowing our views and divesting ourselves at last of common feeling and humanity, we may arrogate every valuable accomplishment to ourselves, and exult ourselves vastly above our fellow-mortals! That is, in other words, we have only to shut our eyes, in order to blot the sun out of heaven, and to annihilate whatever gives light or heat to the world, if it does not emanate from one single source, by spreading the cloud of our own envy, spleen, malice, want of comprehension, and prejudice over it. Yet how many are there who act upon this theory in good earnest, grow more bigoted to it every day, and not only become the dupes of it themselves, but by dint of gravity, by bullying and brow-beating, succeed in making converts of others!

A man is a political economist. Good: but this is no reason he should think there is nothing else in the world, or that every thing else is good for nothing. Let us suppose that this is the most important subject, and that being his favourite study, he is the best judge of that point, still it is not the only one—why then treat every other question or pursuit with disdain as insignificant and mean, or endeavour to put others who have devoted their whole time to it out of conceit with that, on which they depended for their amusement or (perhaps) subsistence? I see neither the wit, wisdom, nor good-nature of this mode of proceeding. Let him fill his library with books on this one subject, yet other persons are not bound to follow the example, and exclude every other topic from theirs—let him write, let him talk, let him think on nothing else, but let him not impose the same pedantic humour as a duty or a mark of taste on others—let him ride the *high horse*, and drag his heavy load of mechanical knowledge along the iron railway of the master-science, but let him not move out of it to taunt or jostle those who are jogging quietly along upon their several *hobbies*, who "owe him no allegiance," and care not one jot for his opinion. Yet we could forgive such a person, if he made it his boast that he had read Don Quixote twice through in the original Spanish, and preferred Lycidas to all Milton's smaller poems! What would Mr. ——— say to any one who should profess a contempt for political economy? He would answer very bluntly and very properly, "Then you know nothing about it." It is a pity that so sensible a man and close a reasoner should think of putting down other lighter and more elegant pursuits by professing a contempt or indifference for them, which springs from precisely the same source, and is of just the same value. But so it is that there seems to be a tacit presumption of folly in whatever gives pleasure; while an air of gravity and wisdom hovers round the painful and precise!

A man comes into a room, and on his first entering, declares without preface or ceremony his contempt for poetry. Are we therefore to conclude him a greater genius than Homer? No: but by this cavalier opinion he assumes a certain natural ascendancy over those who admire poetry. To *look down* upon any thing seemingly implies a greater elevation and enlargement of view than to *look up* to it. The present Lord Chancellor took upon him to declare in open court that he would not go across the street to hear Madame Catalani sing. What did this prove? His want of an ear for music, not his capacity for any thing higher. So far as it went, it only showed him to be inferior to those thousands of persons who go with eager expectation to hear her, and come away with astonishment and rapture. A man might as well tell you he is deaf, and expect you to look at him with more respect. The want of any external sense or organ is an acknowledged defect and infirmity: the want of an internal sense or faculty is equally so, though our self-love contrives to give a different turn to it. We mortify others by *throwing cold water* on that in which they have an advantage over us, or stagger their opinion of an excellence which is not of self-evident or absolute utility, and lessen its supposed value, by limiting the universality of a taste for it. Lord Eldon's protest on this occasion was the more extraordinary, as he is not only a good-natured but a successful man. These little spiteful allusions are most apt to proceed from disappointed vanity, and an apprehension that justice is not done to ourselves. By being at the top of a profession, we have leisure to look beyond it. Those who really excel and are allowed to excel in any thing, have no excuse for trying to gain a reputation by undermining the pretensions of others; they stand on their own ground; and do not need the aid of invidious comparisons. Besides, the consciousness of excellence produces a fondness for, a faith in it. I should half suspect that any one could not be a great lawyer, who denied that Madame Catalani was a great singer. The Chancellor must dislike her decisive tone, the rapidity of her movements! The late Chancellor (Erskine) was a man of (at least) a different stamp. In the exuberance and buoyancy of his animal spirits, he scattered the graces and ornaments of life over the dust and cobwebs of the law. What is there that is now left of him—what is there to redeem his foibles, or to recall the flush of early enthusiasm in his favour, or kindle one spark of sympathy in the breast, but his romantic admiration of Mrs. Siddons? There are those who, if you praise *Walton's Complete Angler*, sneer at it as a childish or old-womanish performance: some laugh at the amusement of fishing as silly, others carp at it as cruel; and Dr. Johnson said that "a fishing-rod was a stick with a hook at one end, and a fool at the other." I would rather take the word of one who had stood for days up to his knees in water, and in the coldest weather, intent on this employ, who returned to it again with unabated relish, and who spent his whole life in the same manner without being weary of it at last. There is something in this more than Dr. Johnson's definition accounts for. A *fool* does not take an interest in any thing; or if he does, it is better to be a fool than a wise man, whose only pleasure is to disparage the pursuits and occupations of others, and out of ignorance or prejudice to condemn them, merely because they are not *his*.

Whatever interests, is interesting. I know of no way of estimating the real value of objects in all their bearings and consequences, but I can tell at once their intellectual value by the degree of passion or sentiment the very idea and mention of them excites in the mind. To judge of things by reason or the calculations of positive utility is a slow, cold, uncertain, and barren process—their power of appealing to and affecting the imagination as subjects of thought and feeling is best measured by the habitual impression they leave upon the mind, and it is with this only we have to do in expressing our delight or admiration of them, or in setting a just mental value upon them. They ought to excite all the emotion which they do excite; for this is the instinctive and unerring result of the constant experience we have had of their power of affecting us, and of the associations that cling unconsciously to them. Fancy, feeling may be very inadequate tests of truth; but truth itself operates chiefly on the human mind through them. It is in vain to tell me that what excites the heart-felt sigh of youth, the tears of delight in age, and fills up the busy interval between with pleasing and lofty thoughts, is frivolous, or a waste of time, or of no use. You only by that give me a mean opinion of your ideas of utility. The labour of years, the triumph of aspiring genius and consummate skill, is not to be put down by a cynical frown, by a supercilious smile, by an ignorant sarcasm. Things barely of use are subjects of professional skill and scientific inquiry: they must also be beautiful and pleasing to attract common attention, and to be naturally and universally interesting. A pair of shoes is good to wear: a pair of sandals is a more picturesque object; and a statue or a poem are certainly good to think and talk about, which are part of the business of life. To think and speak of them with contempt is therefore a wilful and studied solecism. Pictures are good things to go and see. This is what people do; they do not expect to taste or make a dinner of them; but we sometimes want to fill up the time before dinner. The progress of civilization and refinement is from instrumental to final causes; from supplying the wants of the body to providing luxuries for the mind. To stop at the *mechanical*, and refuse to proceed to the *fine arts*, or churlishly to reject all ornamental studies and elegant accomplishments as mean and trivial, because they only afford employment to the imagination, create food for thought, furnish the mind, sustain the soul in health and enjoyment, is a rude and barbarous theory—

> "Et propter vitam perdere causas vivendi."

Before we absolutely condemn any thing, we ought to be able to show something better, not merely in itself, but in the same class. To know the best in each class infers a higher degree of taste; to reject the class is only a negation of taste; for different classes do not interfere with one another, nor can any one's *ipse dixit* be taken on so wide a question as abstract excellence. Nothing is truly and altogether despicable that excites angry contempt or warm opposition, since this always implies that some one else is of a different opinion, and takes an equal interest in it.

When I speak of what is interesting, however, I mean not only to a particular profession, but in general to others. Indeed, it is the very popularity and obvious interest attached to certain studies and pursuits, that excites the envy and hostile regard of graver and more recondite professions. Man is perhaps not naturally an egotist, or at least he is satisfied with his own particular line of excellence and the value that he supposes inseparable from it, till he comes into the world and finds it of so little account in the eyes of the vulgar; and he then turns round and vents his chagrin and disappointment on those more attractive, but (as he conceives) superficial studies, which cost less labour and patience to understand them, and are of so much less use to society. The injustice done to ourselves makes us unjust to others. The man of science and the hard student (from this cause, as well as from a certain unbending hardness of mind) come at last to regard whatever is generally pleasing and striking as worthless and light, and to proportion their contempt to the admiration of others; while the artist, the poet, and the votary of pleasure and popularity treat the more solid and useful branches of human knowledge as disagreeable and dull. This is often carried to too great a length. It is enough that "wisdom is justified of her children:" the philosopher ought to smile, instead of being angry at the folly of mankind (if such it is), and those who find both pleasure and profit in adorning and polishing the airy "capitals" of science and of art, ought not to grudge those who toil underground at the foundation, the praise that is due to their perseverance and self-denial. There is a variety of tastes and capacities, that requires all the variety of men's talents to administer to it. The less excellent must be provided for, as well as the more excellent. Those who are only capable of amusement ought to be amused. If all men were forced to be great philosophers and lasting benefactors of their species, how few of us could ever do any thing at all! But nature acts more impartially, though not improvidently. Wherever she bestows a *turn* for any thing on the individual, she implants a corresponding taste for it in others. We have only to "throw our bread upon the waters, and after many days we shall find it again." Let us do our best, and we need not be ashamed of the smallness of our talent, or afraid of the calumnies and contempt of envious maligners. When Goldsmith was talking one day to Sir Joshua of writing a fable in which little fishes were to be introduced, Dr. Johnson rolled about uneasily in his seat and began to laugh, on which Goldsmith said rather angrily—"Why do you laugh? If you were to write a fable for little fishes, you would make them speak like great whales!" The reproof was just. Johnson was in truth conscious of Goldsmith's superior inventiveness, and of the lighter graces of his pen, but he wished to reduce every thing to his own pompous and oracular style. There are not only *books for children*, but books for all ages and for both sexes. After we grow up to years of discretion, we do not all become equally wise at once. Our own tastes change: the tastes of other individuals are still more different. It was said the other day, that "Thomson's Seasons would be read while there was a boarding-school girl in the world." If a thousand volumes were written against *Hervey's Meditations*, the Meditations would be read when the criticisms were forgotten. To the illiterate and vain, affectation and verbiage will always pass for fine writing, while the world stands. No woman ever liked Burke, or disliked Goldsmith. It is idle to set up an universal standard. There is a large class who, in spite of themselves, prefer Westall or Angelica Kauffman to Raphael; nor is it fit they should do otherwise. We may come to something like a fixed and exclusive standard of taste, if we confine ourselves to what will please the best judges, meaning thereby persons of the most refined and cultivated minds, and by persons of the most refined and cultivated minds, generally meaning *ourselves!*[*]

To return to the original question. I can conceive of nothing so little or ridiculous as pride. It is a mixture of insensibility and ill-nature, in which it is hard to say which has the largest share. If a man knows or excels in, or has ever studied any two things, I will venture to affirm he will be proud of neither. It is perhaps excusable for a person who is ignorant of all but one thing, to think *that* the sole excellence, and to be full of himself as the possessor. The way to cure him of this folly is to give him something else to be proud of. Vanity is a building that falls to the ground as you widen its foundation, or strengthen the props that should support it. The greater a man is, the less he necessarily thinks of himself; for his knowledge enlarges with his attainments. In himself he feels that he is nothing, a point, a speck in the universe, except as his mind reflects that universe, and as he enters into the infinite variety of truth, beauty, and power contained in it. Let any one be brought up among books, and taught to think words the only things, and he may conceive highly of himself from the proficiency he has made in language and in letters. Let him then be compelled to attempt some other pursuit—painting, for instance—and be made to feel the difficulties, the refinements of which it is capable, and the number of things of which he was utterly ignorant before, and there will be an end of his pedantry and his pride together. Nothing but the want of comprehension of view or generosity of spirit can make any one fix on his own particular acquirement as the limit of all excellence. No one is (generally speaking) great in more than one thing—if he extends his pursuits, he dissipates his strength—yet in that one thing, how small is the interval between him and the next in merit and reputation to himself! But he thinks nothing of, or scorns or loathes the name of his rival, so that all that the other possesses in common goes for nothing, and the fraction of a difference between them constitutes (in his opinion) the sum and substance of all that is excellent in the universe! Let a man be wise, and then let us ask, will his wisdom make him proud? Let him excel all others in the graces of the mind, has he also those of the body? He has the advantage of fortune, but has he also that of birth; or if he has both, has he health, strength, beauty in a supreme degree? Or have not others the same, or does he think all these nothing because he does not possess them? The proud man fancies that there is no one worth regarding but himself: he might as well fancy there is no other being but himself. The one is not a greater stretch of madness than the other. To make pride justifiable, there ought to be but one proud man in the world; for if any one individual has a right to be so, nobody else has. So far from thinking ourselves superior to all the rest of the species, we cannot be sure that we are above the meanest and most despised individual of it: for he may have some virtue, some excellence, some source of happiness or usefulness within himself, which may redeem all other disadvantages: or even if he is without any such hidden worth, this is not a subject of exultation, but of regret, to any one tinctured with the smallest humanity; and he who is totally devoid of the latter, cannot have much reason to be proud of any thing else. Arkwright, who invented the spinning-jenny, for many years kept a paltry barber's shop in a provincial town: yet at that time that wonderful machinery was working in his brain, which has added more to the wealth and resources of his country than all the pride of ancestry or insolence of upstart nobility for the last hundred years. We should be cautious whom we despise. If we do not know them, we can have no right to pronounce a hasty sentence: if we do, they may espy some few defects in us. *No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre.* What is it then that makes the difference? The dress, and pride. But he is the most of a hero who is least distinguished by the one, and most free from the other. If we enter into conversation upon equal terms with the lowest of the people, unrestrained by circumstance, unawed by interest, we shall find in ourselves but little superiority over them. If we know what they do not, they know what we do not. In general, those who do things for others, know more about them than those for whom they are done. A groom knows more about horses than his master. He rides them too: but the one rides behind, the other before! Hence the number of forms and ceremonies that have been invented to keep the magic circle of willing self-importance inviolate. The late King sought but one interview with Dr. Johnson: his present Majesty is never tired of the company of Mr. Croker!

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[*] The books that we like in youth we return to in age, if there is nature and simplicity in them. At what age should Robinson Crusoe be laid aside? I do not think that Don Quixote is a book for children, or at least, they understand it better as they grow up.

The collision of truth or genius naturally gives a shock to the pride of exalted rank: the great and mighty usually seek out the dregs of mankind, buffoons and flatterers, for their pampered self-love to repose on. Pride soon tires of every thing but its shadow, servility: but how poor a triumph is that which exists only by excluding all rivalry, however remote. He who invites competition (the only test of merit,) who challenges fair comparison, and weighs different claims, is alone possessed of manly ambition; but will not long continue vain or proud. Pride is "a cell of ignorance; travelling a-bed." If we look at all out of ourselves, we must see how far short we are of what we would be thought. The man of genius is poor;* the rich man is not a lord: the lord wants to be a king: the king is uneasy to be a tyrant or a God. Yet he alone, who could claim this last character upon earth, gave his life a ransom for others! The dwarf in the romance, who saw the shadows of the fairest and the mightiest among the sons of men pass before him, that he might assume the shape he liked best, had only his choice of wealth, or beauty, or valour, or power. But could he have clutched them all, and melted them into one essence of pride, the triumph would not have been lasting. Could vanity take all pomp and power to itself, could it, like the rainbow, span the earth, and seem to prop the heavens, after all it would be but the wonder of the ignorant, the pageant of a moment. The fool who dreams that he is great should first forget that he is a man, and before he thinks of being proud, should pray to be mad. The only great man in modern times, that is, the only man who rose in deeds and fame to the level of antiquity, who might turn his gaze upon himself and wonder at his height, for on him all eyes were fixed as his majestic stature towered above thrones and monuments of renown, died the other day in exile, and in lingering agony; and we still see fellows strutting about the streets, and fancying they are something!

Personal vanity is incompatible with the great and the *ideal.* He who has not seen or thought or read of something finer than himself, has seen or read or thought little; and he who has, will not be always looking in the glass of his own vanity. Hence poets, artists, and men of genius in general are seldom coxcombs, but often slovens; for they find something out of themselves better worth studying than their own persons. They have an imaginary standard in their minds, with which ordinary features (even their own) will not bear a comparison, and they turn their thoughts another way. If a man had a face like one of Raphael's or Titian's heads, he might be proud of it, but not else; and even then, he would be stared at as a *non-descript* by "the universal English nation." Few persons who have seen the Antinous or the Theseus will be much charmed with their own beauty or symmetry; nor will those who understand the *costume* of the antique or Vandyke's dresses, spend much time in decking themselves out in all the deformity of the prevailing fashion. A coxcomb is his own lay-figure, for want of any better models to employ his time and imagination upon.

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* I do not speak of poverty as an absolute evil; though when accompanied with luxurious habits and vanity, it is a great one. Even hardships and privations have their use, and give strength and endurance. Labour renders ease delightful—hunger is the best sauce. The peasant, who at noon rests from his weary task under a hawthorn hedge, and eats his slice of coarse bread and cheese or rusty bacon, enjoys more real luxury than the prince with pampered, listless appetite under a canopy of state. Why then does the mind of man pity the former, and envy the latter? It is because the imagination changes places with others in situation only, not in feeling; and in fancying ourselves the peasant, we revolt at his homely fare, from not being possessed of his gross taste or keen appetite, while in thinking of the prince, we suppose ourselves to sit down to his delicate viands and sumptuous board, with a relish unabated by long habit and vicious excess. I am not sure whether Mandeville has not given the same answer to this hackneyed question.

There is an inverted sort of pride, the reverse of that egotism that has been above described, aud which, because it cannot be every thing, is dissatisfied with every thing. A person who is liable to this infirmity "thinks nothing done, while any thing remains to be done." The sanguine egotist prides himself on what he can do or possesses; the morbid egotist despises himself for what he wants, and is ever going out of his way to attempt hopeless and impossible tasks. The effect in either case is not at all owing to reason, but to temperament. The one is as easily depressed by what mortifies his latent ambition, as the other is elated by what flatters his immediate vanity. There are persons whom no success, no advantages, no applause can satisfy; for they dwell only on failure and defeat. They constantly "forget the things that are behind, and press forward to the things that are before." The greatest and most decided acquisitions would not indemnify them for the smallest deficiency. They go beyond the old motto—*Aut Cæsar, aut nihil*—they not only want to be at the head of whatever they undertake, but if they succeed in that, they immediately want to be at the head of something else, no matter how gross or trivial. The charm that rivets their affections is not the importance or reputation annexed to the new pursuit, but its novelty or difficulty. That must be a wonderful accomplishment indeed, which baffles their skill—nothing is with them of any value but as it gives scope to their restless activity of mind, their craving after an uneasy and importunate state of excitement. To them the pursuit is every thing, the possession nothing. I have known persons of this stamp, who, with every reason to be satisfied with their success in life, and with the opinion entertained of them by others, despised themselves because they could not do something which they were not bound to do, and which, if they could have done it, would not have added one jot to their respectability, either in their own eyes or those of any one else, the very insignificance of the attainment irritating their impatience, for it is the humour of such dispositions to argue, "If they cannot succeed in what is trifling and contemptible, how should they succeed in any thing else?" If they could make the circuit of the arts and sciences and master them all, they would take to some mechanical exercise, and if they failed, be as discontented as ever. All that they can do vanishes out of sight the moment it is within their grasp, and "nothing is, but what is not." A poet of this description is ambitious of the thews and muscles of a prize-fighter, and thinks himself nothing without them. A prose-writer would be a fine tennis-player, and is thrown into despair because he is not one, without considering that it requires a whole life devoted to the game to excel in it; and that, even if he could dispense with this apprenticeship, he would still be just as much bound to excel in rope-dancing, or horsemanship, or playing at cup and ball like the Indian jugglers, all which is impossible. This feeling is a strange mixture of modesty and pride. We think nothing of what we are, because we cannot be every thing with a wish. Goldsmith was even jealous of beauty in the other sex, and a similar character is attributed to Wharton by Pope:

> "Though listening senates hung on all he spoke,
> The club must hail him master of the joke."

Players are for going into the church—officers in the army turn players. For myself, do what I might, I should think myself a poor creature unless I could beat a boy of ten years old at chuck-farthing, or an elderly gentlewoman at piquet!

The extreme of fastidious discontent and repining is as bad as that of over-weening presumption. We ought to be satisfied if we have succeeded in any one thing, or with having done our best. Any thing more is for health and amusement, and should be resorted to as a source of pleasure, not of fretful impatience, and endless, petty, self-imposed mortification. Perhaps the jealous, uneasy temperament is most favourable to continued exertion and improvement, if it does not lead us to fritter away attention on too many pursuits. By looking out of ourselves, we gain knowledge: by being little satisfied with what we have done, we are less apt to sink into indolence and security. To conclude with a piece of egotism: I never begin one of these *Essays* with a consciousness of having written a line before; and endeavour to do my best, because I seem hitherto to have done nothing!

ESSAY XVI.

On the Regal Character.

This is a subject exceedingly curious, and worth explaining. In writing a criticism, I hope I shall not be accused for intending a libel.

Kings are remarkable for long memories in the merest trifles. They never forget a face or person they have once seen, nor an anecdote they have been told of any one they know. Whatever differences of character or understanding they manifest in other respects, they all possess what Dr. Spurzheim would call the *organ of individuality*, or the power of recollecting particular local circumstances, nearly in the same degree ; though I shall attempt to account for it without recurring to his system. This kind of personal memory is the natural effect of that self-importance which makes them attach a correspondent significance to all that comes in contact with themselves. Nothing can be a matter of indifference to a King, that happens to a King. That intense consciousness of their lofty identity, which never quits them, extends to whatever falls under their immediate cognizance. It is the glare of Majesty reflected from their own persons on the persons of those about them, that fixes their attention ; and it is the same false lustre that makes them blind and insensible to all that lies beyond that narrow sphere. "My Lord," said an English King to one of his courtiers, "I have seen you in that coat before with different buttons"—to the astonishment of the Noble Peer. There was nothing wonderful in it. It was the habitual jealousy of the Sovereign of the respect due to him, that made him regard with lynx-eyed watchfulness even the accidental change of dress in one of his favourites. The least diminution of glossy splendour in a birth-day suit, considered as a mark of slackened duty or waning loyalty, would expose it, tarnished and threadbare to the keen glance of dormant pride, waked to suspicion. A God does not penetrate into the hearts of his worshippers with surer insight, than a King, fond of the attributes of awe and sovereignty, detects the different degrees of fawning adulation in those around him. Every thing relating to external appearance and deportment is scanned with the utmost nicety, as compromising the dignity of the royal presence. Involuntary gestures become overt acts; an inconsiderate word is magnified into a crime against the State. To suggest advice, or offer information unasked, is to arraign the fallibility of the throne: to hint a difference of opinion to a King, would create as great a shock, as if you were to present a pistol to the breast of any other man. "Never touch a King," was the answer of an infirm monarch to one who had saved him from a dangerous fall. When a glass of wine was presented to the Emperor Alexander by a servant in livery, he started, as if he had trod upon a serpent. Such is their espect for themselves! Such is their opinion of human nature! —"There's a divinity doth hedge a King," that keeps their bodies and their minds sacred within the magic circle of a name; and it is their fear lest this circle should be violated or approached without sufficient awe, that makes them observe and remember the countenances of others with such infinite circumspection and exactness.

As Kings have the sagacity of pride, courtiers have the cunning of fear. They watch their own behaviour and that of others with breathless apprehension, and move amidst the artificial forms of court-etiquette, as if the least error must be fatal to them. Their sense of personal propriety is heightened by servility: every faculty is wound up to flatter the vanity and prejudices of their superiors. When Coates painted a portrait in crayons of Queen Charlotte on her first arrival in this country, the King followed by a train of attendants, went to look at it. The trembling artist stood by. "Well, what do you think?" said the King to those in waiting. Not a word in reply. "Do you think it like?" Still all was hushed as death. "Why, yes," (he added,) "I think it is like, very like." A buzz of admiration instantly filled the room; and the old Duchess of Northumberland, going up to the artist, and tapping him familiarly on the shoulder, said, "Remember, Mr. Coates, I am to have the first copy!" On another occasion, when the Queen had sat for her portrait, one of the maids of honour coming into the room curtesied to the reflection in the glass, affecting to mistake it for the Queen. The picture was, you may be sure, a flattering likeness. In the Memoirs of Count Grammont, it is related of Louis XIV. that having a dispute at chess with one of his courtiers, no one present would give an opinion. "Oh," said he, "here comes Count Hamilton, he shall decide which of us is in the right."—"Your Majesty is in the wrong," replied the Count, without looking at the board. On which the King remonstrating with him on the impossibility of his judging till he saw the state of the game, he answered, "Does your Majesty suppose that if you were in the right, all these Noblemen would stand by and say nothing?" A King was once curious to know, which was the tallest, himself or a certain courtier. "Let us measure," said the King. The King stood up to be measured first; but when the person who was fixed upon to take their height came to measure the Nobleman, he found it quite impossible, as he first rose on tip-toe, then crouched down, now shrugged up his shoulders to the right, then twisted his body to the left. Afterwards his friend asking him the reason of these unaccountable gesticulations, he replied, "I could not tell whether the King wished me to be taller or shorter than himself; and all the time I was making those odd movements, I was watching his countenance to see what I ought to do." If such is the exquisite pliability of the inmates of a court in trifles like these, what must be their independence of spirit and disinterested integrity in questions of peace and war, that involve the rights of Sovereigns or the liberties of the people! It has been suggested (and not without reason) that the difficulty of trusting to the professions of those who surround them, is one circumstance that renders Kings such expert physiognomists, the language of the countenance being the only one they have left to decypher the thoughts of others; and the very disguises which are practised to prevent the emotions of the mind from appearing in the face, only rendering them more acute and discriminating observers. It is the same insincerity and fear of giving offence by candour and plain-speaking in their immediate dependents, that makes Kings gossips and inquisitive. They have no way of ascertaining the opinions of others, but by getting them up into a corner, and extorting the commonest information from them, piecemeal, by endless, teasing, tiresome questions and cross-examination. The walls of a palace, like those of a convent, are the favoured abode of scandal and tittle-tattle. The inhabitants of both are equally shut out from the common privileges and common incidents of humanity, and whatever relates to the every-day world about us, has to them the air of romance. The desire which the most meritorious Princes have shown to acquire information on matters of fact rather than of opinion, is partly because their prejudices will not suffer them to exercise their understandings freely on the most important speculative questions, partly from their jealousy of being dictated to on any point that admits of a question ;—as, on the other hand, the desire which the Sovereigns of northern and uncultivated kingdoms have shown to become acquainted with the arts and elegances of life in southern nations, is evidently owing to their natural jealousy of the advantages of civilization over barbarism. From the principle here stated, Peter the Great visited this country, and worked in our dock-yards as a common ship-wright. To the same source may be traced the curiosity of the Duchess of Oldenburgh to see a beef-steak cooked, to take a peep into Mr. Meaux's great brewing-vat, and to hear Mr. Whitbread speak !

The common regal character is then the reverse of what it ought to be. It is the purely *personal*, occupied with its own petty feelings, prejudices, and pursuits ; whereas it ought to be the purely philosophical, exempt from all personal considerations, and contemplating itself only in its general and paramount relation to the State. This is the reason why there have been so few great Kings. They want the power of abstraction : and their situations are necessarily at variance with their duties in this respect ; for every thing forces them to concentrate their attention upon themselves, and to consider their rank and privileges in connection with their private advantage, rather than with public good. This is but natural. It is easier to employ the power they possess in pampering their own appetites and passions, than to wield it for the benefit of a great empire. They see well enough how the community is made for them, not so well how they are made for the community. Not knowing how to act as stewards for their trust, they set up for heirs to the estate, and waste it at their pleasure:—without aspiring to reign as Kings, they are contented to live as *spunges* upon royalty. A great King ought to be the greatest philosopher and the truest patriot in his dominions: hereditary Kings can be but common mortals. It is not that they are not equal to other men, but to be equal to their rank as Kings, they ought to be more than men. Their power is equal to that of the whole community: their wisdom and virtue ought to keep pace with their power. But in ordinary cases, the height to which they are raised, instead of enlarging their views or ennobling their sentiments, makes them giddy with vanity, and ready to look down on the world which is subjected to their power, as the plaything of their will. They regard men crawling on the face of the earth, as we do the insects that cross our path, and survey the common drama of human life as a fantoccini exhibition got up for their amusement. There is no sympathy between Kings and their subjects; except in a constitutional monarchy like ours, through the medium of Lords and Commons. Take away that check upon their ambition and rapacity, and their pretensions become as monstrous as they are ridiculous. Without the common feelings of humanity in their own breasts, they have no regard for them in their aggregate amount and accumulating force. Reigning in contempt of the people, they would crush and trample upon all power but their own. They consider the claims of justice and compassion as so many impertinent interferences with the royal prerogative. They despise the millions of slaves whom they see linked to the foot of the throne; and they soon hate what they despise. They will sacrifice a kingdom for a caprice, and mankind for a bauble. Weighed in the scales of their pride, the meanest things become of the greatest importance: weighed in the balance of reason, the universe is nothing to them. It is this overweening, aggravated, intolerable sense of swelling pride and ungovernable self-will, that sometimes disorders their imaginations; as it is their blind fatuity and insensibility to all beyond themselves, that, transmitted through successive generations and confirmed by regal intermarriages, in time makes them idiots. When we see a poor creature like Ferdinand VII., who can hardly gabble out his words like a human being, more imbecile than a woman, more hypocritical than a priest, decked and dandled in the long robes and swaddling clothes of Legitimacy, lullabied to rest with the dreams of superstition, drunk with the patriot-blood of his country, and launching the thunders of his coward-arm against the rising liberties of a new world, while he claims the style and title of Image of the Divinity, we may laugh or weep, but there is nothing to wonder at. Tyrants forego all respect for humanity in proportion as they are sunk beneath it:—taught to believe themselves of a different species, they really become so; lose their participation with the kind; and in mimicking the God, dwindle into the brute! Blind with prejudices as a mole, stung with truth as with scorpions, sore all over with wounded pride like a boil, their minds a morbid heap of proud flesh and bloated humours, a disease and gangrene in the State, instead of its life-blood and vital principle;—foreign despots claim mankind as their property, "independently of their conduct or merits," and there is one Englishman found base enough to echo the foul calumny against his country and his kind.

We might, in the same manner, account for the disparity between the public and private character of Kings. It is the misfortune of most Kings (not their fault) to be born to thrones, a situation which ordinary talents or virtue cannot fill with impunity. We often find a very respectable man make but a very sorry figure as a Sovereign. Nay, a Prince may be possessed of extraordinary virtues and accomplishments, and not be more thought of for them. He may, for instance, be a man of good nature and good manners, graceful in his person, the idol of the other sex, the model of his own; every word or look may be marked with the utmost sense of propriety and delicate attention to the feelings of others; he may be a good classic, well-versed in history—may speak Italian, French, Spanish, and German fluently; he may be an excellent mimic; he may say good things, and do friendly ones; he may be able to join in a catch, or utter a repartee, or dictate a billet-doux; he may be master of Hoyle, and deep in the rules of the Jockey Club; he may have an equal taste in ragouts and poetry, in dancing and in dress; he may adjust a toupée with the dexterity of a friseur, or tie a cravat with the hand and eye of a man-milliner: he may have all these graces and accomplishments, and as many more, and yet he may be nothing; as without any one of them he may be a great Prince. They are not the graces and accomplishments of a Sovereign, but of a Lord of the Bedchamber. They do not show a great mind, bent on great objects, and swayed by lofty views. They are rather foibles and blemishes in the character of a ruler; for they imply that his attention has been turned as much upon adorning his own person as upon advancing the State. Charles II. was a King, such as we have here described; amiable, witty, and accomplished, and yet his memory is equally despised and detested. Charles was without strength of mind or public principle. He could not arrive at the comprehension of that mixed mass of thought and feeling, a *kingdom*—he thought merely of the *throne*. He was as unlike Cromwell in the manner in which he came by the Sovereignty of the realm as in the use he made of it. He saw himself, not in the glass of history, but in the glass on his toilette,—not in the eyes of posterity, but of his courtiers and mistresses. Instead of regulating his conduct by public opinion and abstract reason, he did every thing from a feeling of personal convenience. Charles would have been more annoyed with the rejection of a licentious overture than with the rebellion of a province; and poured out the blood of his subjects with the same gaiety and indifference as he did a glass of wine. He had no idea of his obligations to the State, and only laid aside the private gentleman to become the tyrant of his people. Charles was popular in his life-time, Cibber tells us, because he used to walk out with his spaniels and feed his ducks in St. James's Park. History has consigned his name to infamy for the executions under Jeffries, and for his league with a legitimate despot, to undermine the liberties of his country.

What is it, then, that makes a great Prince? Not the understanding Purcell or Mozart, but the having an ear open to the voice of truth and justice! Not a taste in made-dishes, or French wines, or court-dresses, but a fellow-feeling with the calamities of hunger, of cold, of disease, and nakedness! Not a knowledge of the elegances of fashionable life, but a heart that feels for the millions of its fellow-beings in want of the common necessaries of life! Not a set of brilliant frivolous accomplishments, but a manly strength of character, proof against the seductions of a throne! He, in short, is a patriot King, who, without any other faculty usually possessed by Sovereigns, has one which they seldom possess,—the power in imagination of changing places with his people. Such a King may indeed aspire to the character of a ruling providence over a nation; any other is but the head-cypher of a court!

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TABLE TALK.

ESSAY XVII.

On the Look of a Gentleman.

"The noblemen-look? Yes, I know what you mean very well: that look which a nobleman should have, rather than what they have generally now. The Duke of Buckingham (Sheffield*) was a genteel man, and had a great deal the look you speak of. Wycherley was a very genteel man, and had the nobleman look as much as the Duke of Buckingham."—POPE.

"He instanced it too in Lord Peterborough, Lord Bolingbroke, Lord Hinchinbroke, the Duke of Bolton, and two or three more."—SPENCE'S *Anecdotes of Pope.*

I HAVE chosen the above motto to a very delicate subject, which in prudence I might let alone. I, however, like the title; and will try, at least, to make a sketch of it.

What it is that constitutes the look of a gentleman is more easily felt than described. We all know it when we see it; but we do not know how to account for it, or to explain in what it consists. *Causa latet, res ipsa notissima.* Ease, grace, dignity, have been given as the exponents and expressive symbols of this look; but I would rather say, that an habitual self-possession determines the appearance of a gentleman. He should have the complete command not only over his countenance, but over his limbs and motions. In other words, he should discover in his air and manner a voluntary power over his whole body, which, with every inflexion of it, should be under the control of his will. It must be evident that he looks and does as he likes, without any restraint, confusion, or awkwardness. He is, in fact, master of his person, as the professor of an art or science is of a particular instrument; he directs it to what use he pleases and intends. Wherever this power and facility appear, we recognize the look and deportment of the gentleman, that is, of a person who by his habits and situation in life, and in his ordinary intercourse with society, has had little else to do than to study those movements, and that carriage of the body, which were accompanied with most satisfaction to himself, and were calculated to excite the approbation of the beholder. Ease, it might be observed, is no enough; dignity is too much. There must be a certain *retenu* a conscious decorum added to the first,—and a certain "familiarity of regard, quenching the austere countenance of control," in the second, to answer to our conception of this character. Perhaps propriety is as near a word as any to denote the manners of the gentleman; elegance is necessary to the fine gentleman; dignity is proper to noblemen; and majesty to kings!

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* *Quere*, Villiers, because in another place it is said, that "when the latter entered the presence-chamber, he attracted all eyes by the handsomeness of his person, and the gracefulness of his demeanor."

Wherever this constant and decent subjection of the body to the mind is visible in the customary actions of walking, sitting, riding, standing, speaking, &c., we draw the same conclusion as to the individual—whatever may be the impediments or unavoidable defects in the machine, of which he has the management. A man may have a mean or disagreeable exterior, may halt in his gait, or have lost the use of half his limbs; and yet he may show this habitual attention to what is graceful and becoming in the use he makes of all the power he has left—in the "nice conduct" of the most unpromising and impracticable figure. A hump-backed or deformed man does not necessarily look like a clown or a mechanic; on the contrary, from his care in the adjustment of his appearance, and his desire to remedy his defects, he for the most part acquires something of the look of a gentleman. The common nick-name of *My Lord*, applied to such persons, has allusion to this—to their circumspect deportment, and tacit resistance to vulgar prejudice. Lord Ogleby, in the Clandestine Marriage, is as crazy a piece of elegance and refinement, even after he is "wound up for the day," as can well be imagined; yet in the hands of a genuine actor, his tottering step, his twitches of the gout, his unsuccessful attempts at youth and gaiety, take nothing from the nobleman. He has the *idea*' model in his mind, resents his deviations from it with proper horror, recovers himself from any ungraceful action as soon as possible: does all he can with his limited means, and fails in his just pretensions, not from inadvertence, but necessity. Sir Joseph Banks, who was almost bent double, retained to the last the look of a privy-counsellor. There was all the firmness and dignity that could be given by the sense of his own importance to so distorted and disabled a trunk. Sir Charles Bunbury, as he saunters down St. James's street, with a large slouched hat, a lack-lustre eye and aquiline nose, an old shabby drab-coloured coat, buttoned across his breast without a cape—with old top-boots, and his hands in his waistcoat or breeches' pockets, as if he were strolling along his own garden-walks, or over the turf at Newmarket, after having made his bets secure—presents nothing very dazzling, or graceful, or dignified to the imagination; though you can tell infallibly at the first glance, or even a bowshot off, that he is a gentleman of the first water (the same that sixty years ago married the beautiful Lady Sarah L-nn-x, with whom the king was in love). What is the clue to this mystery? It is evident that his person costs him no more trouble than an old glove. His limbs are, from long practice, left to take care of themselves; they move of their own accord; he does not strut or stand on tip-toe to show

> —"how tall
> His person is above them all:"—

but he seems to find his own level, and wherever he is, to slide into his place naturally; he is equally at home among lords or gamblers; nothing can discompose his fixed serenity of look and purpose; there is no mark of superciliousness about him, nor does it appear as if any thing could meet his eye to startle or throw him off his guard; he neither avoids nor courts notice; but the *archaism* of his dress may be understood to denote a lingering partiality for the costume of the last age, and something like a prescriptive contempt for the finery of this. The old one-eyed Duke of Queensberry is another example that I might quote. As he sat in his bow-window in Piccadilly, erect and emaciated, he seemed like a nobleman framed and glazed, or a well-dressed mummy of the Court of George II.

We have few of these precious specimens of the gentleman or nobleman-look now remaining; other considerations have set aside the exclusive importance of the character, and of course the jealous attention to the outward expression of it. Where we oftenest meet with it now-a-days, is, perhaps, in the butlers in old families, or the valets and "gentlemen's gentlemen" of the younger branches. The sleek pursy gravity of the one answers to the stately air of some of their *quondam* masters; and the flippancy and finery of our old-fashioned beaux, having been discarded by the heirs to the title and estate, have been retained by their lackeys. The late Admiral Byron (I have heard Northcote say) had a butler, or steward, who, from constantly observing his master, had so learned to mimic him—the look, the manner, the voice, the bow, were so alike—he was so "subdued to the very quality of his lord"—that it was difficult to distinguish them apart. Our modern footmen, as we see them fluttering and lounging in lobbies or at the doors of ladies' carriages, bedizened in lace and powder, with ivory-headed cane and embroidered gloves, give one the only idea of the fine gentleman of former periods, as they are still occasionally represented on the stage; and indeed our theatrical heroes, who top such parts, might be supposed to have copied, as a last resource, from the heroes of the shoulder-knot. We also sometimes meet with a straggling personation of this character, got up in common life from pure romantic enthusiasm, and on absolutely ideal principles. I recollect a well-grown comely haberdasher, who made a practice of walking every day from Bishopsgate-street to Pall-mall and Bond-street with the undaunted air and strut of a general-officer; and also a prim undertaker, who regularly tendered his person, whenever the weather would permit, from the neighbourhood of Camberwell into the favourite promenades of the city, with a mincing gait that would have become a gentleman-usher of the black-rod. What a strange infatuation to live in a dream of being taken for what one is not—in deceiving others, and at the same time ourselves; for no doubt these persons believed that they thus appeared to the world in their true characters, and that their assumed pretensions did no more than justice to their real merits.

> "*Dress* makes the man, and want of it the fellow;
> The rest is all but leather and prunella!"

I confess, however, that I admire this look of a gentleman, more when it rises from the level of common life, and bears the stamp of intellect, than when it is formed out of the mould of adventitious circumstances. I think more highly of Wycherley than I do of Lord Hinchinbroke, for looking like a lord. In the one, it was the effect of native genius, grace, and spirit; in the other, comparatively speaking, of pride or custom. A visitor complimenting Voltaire on the growth and flourishing condition of some trees in his grounds,—"Aye," said the French wit, "they have nothing else to do!" A lord has nothing to do but to look like a lord: our comic poet had something else to do, and did it!*

Though the disadvantages of nature or accident do not act as obstacles to the look of a gentleman, those of education and employment do. A shoe-maker, who is bent in two over his daily task; a tailor who sits cross-legged all day; a ploughman, who wears clog-shoes over the furrowed miry soil, and can hardly drag his feet after him; a scholar who has pored all his life over books—are not likely to possess that natural freedom and ease, or to pay that strict attention to personal appearances, that the look of a gentleman implies. I might add, that a man-milliner behind a counter, who is compelled to show every mark of complaisance to his customers, but hardly expects common civility from them in return; or a sheriff's officer, who has a consciousness of power, but none of good-will to or from any body, are equally remote from the *beau idéal* of this character. A man who is awkward from bashfulness is a clown; as one who is showing off a number of impertinent airs and graces at every turn, is a coxcomb, or an upstart. Mere awkwardness or rusticity of behaviour may arise, either from want of presence of mind in the company of our *betters*, (the commonest hind goes about his regular business without any of the *mauvaise honte*,) from a deficiency of breeding, as it is called, in not having been taught certain fashionable accomplishments—or from unremitting application to certain sorts of mechanical labour, unfitting the body for general or indifferent uses. (That vulgarity which proceeds from a total disregard of decorum, and want of careful control over the different actions of the body—such as loud speaking, boisterous gesticulations, &c. is rather rudeness and violence, than awkwardness or uneasy restraint.) Now the gentleman is free from all these causes of ungraceful demeanour. He is independent in his circumstances, and is used to enter into society on equal terms; he is taught the modes of address and forms of courtesy most commonly practised and most proper to ingratiate him into the good opinion of those he associates with; and he is relieved from the necessity of following any of those laborious trades or callings which cramp, strain, and distort the human frame. He is not bound to do any one earthly thing; to use any exertion, or put himself in any posture, that is not perfectly easy and graceful, agreeable and becoming. Neither is he (at the present day) required to excel in any art or science, game or exercise. He is supposed qualified to dance a minuet, not to dance on the tight rope—to stand upright, not to stand on his head. He has only to sacrifice to the Graces. Alcibiades threw away a flute, because the playing on it discomposed his features. Take the fine gentleman out of the common boarding-school or drawing-room accomplishments, and set him to any ruder or more difficult task, and he will make but a sorry figure. Ferdinand in the *Tempest*, when he is put by Prospero to carry logs of wood, does not strike us as a very heroical character, though he loses nothing of the king's son. If a young gallant of the first fashion were asked to shoe a horse, or hold a plough, or fell a tree, he would make a very ridiculous business of the first experiment. I saw a set of young naval officers, very genteel-looking young men, playing at rackets not long ago, and it is impossible to describe the uncouthness of their motions and unaccountable contrivances for hitting the ball. Something effeminate as well as common-place, then, enters into the composition of the gentleman: he is a little of the *petit maitre* in his pretensions. He is only graceful and accomplished in those things to which he has paid almost his whole attention, such as the carriage of his body, and adjustment of his dress; and to which he is of sufficient importance in the scale of society to attract the idle attention of others.

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* Wycherley was a great favourite with the Duchess of Cleveland.

A man's manner of presenting himself in company is but a superficial test of his real qualifications. Serjeant Atkinson, we are assured by Fielding, would have marched at the head of his platoon, up to a masked battery, with less apprehension than he came into a room full of pretty women. So we may sometimes see persons look foolish enough on entering a party, or returning a salutation, who instantly feel themselves at home and recover all their self-possession, as soon as any of that sort of conversation begins from which nine-tenths of the company retire in the extremest trepidation, lest they should betray their ignorance or incapacity. A high spirit and stubborn pride are often accompanied with an unprepossessing and unpretending appearance. The greatest heroes do not discover it by their looks. There are individuals of a nervous habit, who might be said to abhor their own persons, and to startle at their own appearance, as the peacock tries to hide its legs. They are always shy, uncomfortable, restless; and all their actions are, in a manner, at cross-purposes with themselves. This, of course, destroys the look we are speaking of, from the want of ease and self-confidence. There is another sort who have too much negligence of manner and contempt for formal punctilios. They take their full swing in whatever they are about, and make it seem almost necessary to get out of their way. Perhaps something of this bold, licentious, slovenly, lounging character may be objected by a fastidious eye to the appearance of Lord Castlereagh. It might be said of him, without disparagement, that he looks more like a lord than like a gentleman. We see nothing petty or finical, assuredly—nothing hard-bound or reined-in—but a flowing outline, a broad free style. He sits in the House of Commons, with his hat slouched over his forehead, and a sort of stoop in his shoulders, as if he cowered over his antagonists, like a bird of prey over its quarry, "hatching vain empires." There is an irregular grandeur about him, an unwieldy power, loose, disjointed, "voluminous and vast," coiled up in the folds of its own purposes, cold, death-like, smooth and smiling,—that is neither quite at ease with itself, nor safe for others to approach! On the other hand, there is the Marquis of Wellesley, a jewel of a man. He advances into his place in the House of Lords, with head erect, and his best foot foremost. The star sparkles on his breast, and the garter is seen bound tight below his knee. It might be thought that he still trod a measure on soft carpets, and was surrounded not only by spiritual and temporal lords, but—

> " Stores of ladies, whose bright eyes
> Rain influence, and judge the prize."

The chivalrous spirit that shines through him, the air of gallantry in his personal as well as rhetorical appeals to the House, glances a partial lustre on the Woolsack as he addresses it; and makes Lord Erskine raise his sunken head from a dream of transient popularity. His heedless vanity throws itself unblushingly on the unsuspecting candour of his hearers, and ravishes mute admiration. You would almost guess of this nobleman beforehand that he was a marquis—something higher than an earl, and less important than a duke. Nature has just fitted him for the niche he fills in the scale of rank or title. He is a finished miniature-picture set in brilliants: Lord Castlereagh might be compared to a loose sketch in oil, not properly hung. The character of the one is ease,—of the other, elegance. Elegance is something more than ease; it is more than a freedom from awkwardness or restraint. It implies, I conceive, a precision, a polish, a sparkling effect, spirited yet delicate, which is perfectly exemplified in Lord Wellesley's face and figure.

The greatest contrast to this little lively nobleman was the late Lord Stanhope. Tall above his peers, he presented an appearance something between a Patagonian chief and one of the Long Parliament. With his long black hair, " unkept and wild"—his black clothes, lank features, strange antics, and screaming voice, he was the Orson of debate.

> " A Satyr that comes staring from the woods,
> Cannot at first speak like an orator."

Yet he was both an orator and a wit in his way. His ha rangues were an odd jumble of logic and mechanics, of the statutes at large and Joe Miller jests, of stern principle and sly humour, of shrewdness and absurdity, of method and madness. What is more extraordinary, he was an honest man. He was out of his place in the House of Lords. He particularly delighted, in his eccentric onsets, to make havoc of the bench of bishops. "I like," said he, "to argue with one of my lords the bishops; and the reason why I do so is, that I generally have the best of the argument." He was altogether a different man from Lord Eldon; yet his lordship "gave him good œillades," as he broke a jest, or argued a moot-point; and while he spoke smiles, roguish twinkles glittered in the Chancellor's eyes.

The look of the gentleman, "the nobleman look," is little else than the reflection of the looks of the world. We smile at those who smile upon us; we are gracious to those who pay their court to us: we naturally acquire confidence and ease when all goes well with us, when we are encouraged by the blandishments of fortune, and the good opinion of mankind. A whole street bowing regularly to a man, every time he rides out, may teach him how to pull off his hat in return, without supposing a particular genius for bowing (more than for governing or any thing else) born in the family. It has been observed that persons who sit for their pictures improve the character of their countenances, from the desire they have to procure the most favorable representation of themselves. "Tell me, pray good Mr. Carmine, when you come to the eyes, that I may call up a look," says the Alderman's wife, in Foote's farce of Taste. Ladies grow handsome by looking at themselves in the glass, and heightening the agreeable air and expression of features they so much admire there. So the favourites of fortune adjust themselves in the glass of fashion and the flattering illusions of public opinion. Again, the expression of face in the gentleman, or thorough-bred man of the world, is not that of refinement so much as of flexibility; of sensibility or enthusiasm, so much as of indifference:—it argues presence of mind, rather than enlargement of ideas. In this it differs from the heroic and philosophical look. Instead of an intense unity of purpose, wound up to some great occasion, it is dissipated and frittered down into a number of evanescent expressions, fitted for every variety of unimportant occurrences: instead of the expansion of general thought or intellect, you trace chiefly the little, trite, cautious, moveable lines of conscious, but concealed self-complacency. If Raphael had painted St. Paul as a gentleman, what a figure he would have made of the great Apostle of the Gentiles—occupied with himself, not carried away, raised, inspired with his subject—insinuating his doctrines into his audience, not launching them from him with the tongues of the Holy Spirit, and with looks of fiery, scorching zeal! Gentlemen luckily can afford to sit for their own portraits: painters do not trouble them to sit as studies for history. What a difference is there in this respect between a Madonna of Raphael, and a lady of fashion, even by Vandyke: the former refined and elevated, the latter light and trifling, with no emanation of soul, no depth of feeling,—each arch expression playing on the surface, and passing into any other at pleasure,—no one thought having its full scope, but checked by some other,—soft, careless, insincere, pleased, affected, amiable! The French physiognomy is more cut up and subdivided into petty lines and sharp angles than any other: it does not want for subtlety, or an air of gentility, which last it often has in a remarkable degree,—but it is the most unpoetical and the least picturesque of all others. I cannot explain what I mean by this variable telegraphic machinery of polite expression better than by an obvious allusion. Every one by walking the streets of London (or any other populous city) acquires a walk which is easily distinguished from that of strangers; a quick flexibility of movement, a smart jerk, an aspiring and confident tread, and an air as if on the alert to keep the line of march; but for all that, there is not much grace or grandeur in this local strut: you see the person is not a country-bumpkin, but you would not say, he is a hero or a sage—because he is a *cockney.* So it is in passing through the artificial and thickly peopled scenes of life. You get the look of a man of the world: you rub off the pedant and the clown; but you do not make much progress in wisdom or virtue, or in the characteristic expression of either.

The character of a gentleman (I take it) may be explained nearly thus:—A blackguard (*un vaurien*) is a fellow who doe not care whom he offends:—a clown is a blockhead who does not know when he offends:—a gentleman is one who understands and shows every mark of deference to the claims of self-love in others, and exacts it in return from them. Politeness and the pretension to the character in question have reference almost entirely to this reciprocal manifestation of good-will and good opinion towards each other in casual society. Morality regulates our sentiments and conduct as they have a connection with ultimate and important consequences:—manners, properly speaking, regulate our words and actions in the routine of personal intercourse. They have little to do with real kindness of intention, or practical services, or disinterested sacrifices; but they put on the garb, and mock the appearance of these, in order to prevent a breach of the peace, and to smooth and varnish over the discordant materials, when any number of individuals are brought in contact together. The conventional compact of good manners does not reach beyond the moment and the company. Say, for instance, that the *rabble*, the labouring and industrious part of the community, are taken up with supplying their own wants, and pining over their own hardships—scrambling for what they can get, and not refining on any of their pleasures, or troubling themselves about the fastidious pretensions of others: again, there are philosophers who are busied in the pursuit of truth, or patriots who are active for the good of their country; but here, we will suppose, are a knot of people got together, who, having no serious wants of their own, with leisure and independence, and caring little about abstract truth or practical utility, are met for no mortal purpose but to say and to do all manner of obliging things, to pay the greatest possible respect, and show the most delicate and flattering attentions to one another. The politest set of gentlemen and ladies in the world can do no more than this. The laws that regulate this species of select and fantastic society are comformable to its ends and origin. The fine gentleman or lady must not, on any account, say a rude thing to the persons present, but may turn them into the utmost ridicule the instant they are gone: nay, not to do so is sometimes considered as an indirect slight to the party that remains. You must compliment your bitterest foe to his face, and may slander your dearest friend behind his back. The last may be immoral, but it is not unmannerly. The gallant maintains his title to this character by treating every woman he meets with the same marked and unremitting attention as if she was his mistress: the courtier treats every man with the same professions of esteem and kindness as if he were an accomplice with him in some plot against mankind. Of course, these professions, made only to please, go for nothing in practice. To insist on them afterwards as literal obligations, would be to betray an ignorance of this kind of interlude or masquerading in real life. To ruin your friend at play is not inconsistent with the character of a gentleman and a man of honour, if it is done with civility; though to warn him of his danger, so as to imply a doubt of his judgment, or interference with his will, would be to subject yourself to be run through the body with a sword. It is that which wounds the self-love of the individual that is offensive—that which flatters it that is welcome—however salutary the one, or however fatal the other may be. A habit of plain-speaking is totally contrary to the tone of good-breeding. You must prefer the opinion of the company to your own, and even to truth. I doubt whether a gentleman must not be of the Established Church, and a Tory. A true cavalier can only be a martyr to prejudice or fashion. A Whig lord appears to me as great an anomaly as a patriot king. A sectary is sour and unsociable. A philosopher is quite out of the question. He is in the clouds, and had better not be let down on the floor in a basket, to play the blockhead. He is sure to commit himself in good company—and by dealing always in abstractions, and driving at generalities, to offend against the three proprieties of time, place, and person. Authors are angry, loud, and vehement in argument: the man of more refined breeding, who has been "all tranquillity and smiles," goes away, and tries to ruin the antagonist whom he could not vanquish in a dispute. The manners of a court and of a polished life are by no means downright, straight-forward, but the contrary. They have something dramatic in them; each person plays an assumed part; the affected, overstrained politeness and suppression of real sentiment lead to concealed irony and a spirit of satire and raillery; and hence we may account for the perfection of the genteel comedy of the century before the last, when poets were allowed to mingle in the court-circles, and took their cue from the splendid ring

> " Of mimic statesmen and their merry king."

The essence of this sort of conversation and intercourse, both on and off the stage, has somehow since evaporated; the disguises of royalty, nobility, gentry, have been in some measure seen through: we have become individually of little importance, compared with greater objects, in the eyes of our neighbours, and even in our own: abstract topics, not personal pretensions, are the order of the day; so that what remains of the character we have been talking of, is chiefly exotic and provincial, and may be seen still flourishing in country-places, in a wholesome state of vegetable decay!

A man may have the manners of a gentleman without having the look, and he may have the character of a gentleman, in a more abstracted point of view, without the manners. The feelings of a gentleman, in this higher sense, only denote a more refined humanity—a spirit delicate in itself, and unwilling to offend, either in the greatest or the smallest things. This may be coupled with absence of mind, with ignorance of forms, and frequent blunders. But the will is good. The spring of gentle offices and true regards is untainted. A person of this stamp blushes at an impropriety he was guilty of twenty years before, though he is, perhaps, liable to repeat it to-morrow. He never forgives himself for even a slip of the tongue, that implies an assumption of superiority over any one. In proportion to the concessions made to him, he lowers his demands. He gives the wall to a beggar:* but does not always bow to great men. This class of character has been called "God Almighty's gentlemen." There are not a great many of them.—The *late* G. Dyer was one; for we understand that that gentleman was not able to survive some ill-disposed person's having asserted of him, that he had mistaken Lord Castlereagh for the Author of Waverley!

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* The writer of this Essay once saw a Prince of the Blood pull off his hat to every one in the street, till he came to the beggarman that swept the crossing. This was a nice distinction. Farther, it was a distinction that the writer of this Essay would not make to be a Prince of the Blood. Perhaps, however, a question might be started in the manner of Montaigne, whether the beggar did not pull off his hat in quality of asking charity, and not as a mark of respect. Now a prince may decline giving charity, though he is obliged to

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return a civility. If he does not, he may be treated with disrespect another time, and that is an alternative he is bound to prevent. Any other person might set up such a plea, but the person to whom a whole street had been bowing just before.

ESSAY XVIII.

On Reading Old Books.

I HATE to read new books. There are twenty or thirty volumes that I have read over and over again, and these are the only ones that I have any desire ever to read at all. It was a long time before I could bring myself to sit down to the Tales of My Landlord, but now that author's works have made a considerable addition to my scanty library. I am told that some of Lady Morgan's are good, and have been recommended to look into Anastasius; but I have not yet ventured upon that task. A lady, the other day, could not refrain from expressing her surprise to a friend, who said he had been reading Delphine:—she asked—“If it had not been published some time back?” Women judge of books as they do of fashions or complexions, which are admired only in their newest gloss.” That is not my way. I am not one of those who trouble the circulating libraries much, or pester the booksellers for mail-coach copies of standard periodical publications. I cannot say that I am greatly addicted to black-letter, but I profess myself well versed in the marble bindings of Andrew Millar, in the middle of the last century; nor does my taste revolt at Thurloe's State Papers, in Russia leather; or an ample impression of Sir William Temple's Essays, with a portrait after Sir Godfrey Kneller in front. I do not think altogether the worse of a book for having survived the author a generation or two. I have more confidence in the dead than the living. Contemporary writers may generally be divided into two classes—one's friends or one's foes. Of the first we are compelled to think too well, and of the last we are disposed to think too ill, to receive much genuine pleasure from the perusal, or to judge fairly of the merits of either. One candidate for literary fame, who happens to be of our acquaintance, writes finely, and like a man of genius; but unfortunately has a foolish face, which spoils a delicate passage:—another inspires us with the highest respect for his personal talents and character, but does not quite come up to our expectations in print. All these contradictions and petty details interrupt the calm current of our reflections. If you want to know what any of the authors were who lived before our time, and are still objects of anxious inquiry, you have only to look into their works. But the dust and smoke and noise of modern literature have nothing in common with the pure, silent air of immortality.

When I take up a work that I have read before (the oftener the better) I know what I have to expect. The satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated. When the entertainment is altogether new, I sit down to it as I should to a strange dish—turn and pick out a bit here and there, and am in doubt what to think of the composition. There is a want of confidence and security to second appetite. New-fangled books are also like made-dishes in this respect, that they are generally little else than hashes and *rifaccimentos* of what has been served up entire and in a more natural state at other times. Besides, in thus turning to a well-known author, there is not only an assurance that my time will not be thrown away, or my palate nauseated with the most insipid or vilest trash,—but I shake hands with, and look an old, tried, and valued friend in the face,—compare notes, and chat the hours away. It is true, we form dear friendships with such ideal guests—dearer, alas! and more lasting, than those with our most intimate acquaintance. In reading a book which is an old favourite with me (say the first novel I ever read) I not only have the pleasure of imagination and of a critical relish of the work, but the pleasures of memory added to it. It recalls the same feelings and associations which I had in first reading it, and which I can never have again in any other way. Standard productions of this kind are links in the chain of our conscious being. They bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity. They are land-marks and guides in our journey through life. They are pegs and loops on which we can hang up, or from which we can take down, at pleasure, the wardrobe of a moral imagination, the relics of our best affections, the tokens and records of our happiest hours. They are "for thoughts and for remembrance!" They are like Fortunatus's Wishing-Cap—they give us the best riches—those of Fancy; and transport us, not over half the globe, but (which is better) over half our lives, at a word's notice!

My father Shandy solaced himself with Bruscambille. Give me for this purpose a volume of Peregrine Pickle or Tom Jones. Open either of them any where—at the Memoirs of Lady Vane, or the adventures at the masquerade with Lady Bellaston, or the disputes between Thwackum and Square, or the escape of Molly Seagrim, or the incident of Sophia and her muff, or the edifying prolixity of her aunt's lecture—and there I find the same delightful, busy, bustling scene as ever, and feel myself the same as when I was first introduced into the midst of it. Nay, sometimes the sight of an odd volume of these good old English authors on a stall, or the name lettered on the back among others on the shelves of a library, answers the purpose, revives the whole train of ideas, and sets "the puppets dallying." Twenty years are struck off the list, and I am a child again. A sage philosopher, who was not a very wise man, said, that he should like very well to be young again, if he could take his experience along with him. The ingenious person did not seem to be aware, by the gravity of his remark, that the great advantage of being young is to be without this weight of experience, which he would fain place upon the shoulders of youth, and which never comes too late with years. Oh! what a privilege to be able to let this hump, like Christian's burthen, drop from off one's back, and transport one's-self, by the help of a little musty duodecimo, to the time when "ignorance was bliss," and when we first got a peep at the raree-show of the world, through the glass of fiction—gazing at mankind, as we do at wild beasts in a menagerie, through the bars of their cages—or at curiosities in a museum, that we must not touch! For myself, not only are the old ideas of the contents of the work brought back to my mind in all their vividness, but the old associations of the faces and persons of those I then knew, as they were in their life-time—the place where I sat to read the volume, the day when I got it, the feeling of the air, the fields, the sky—return, and all my early impressions with them. This is better to me—those places, those times, those persons, and those feelings that come across me as I retrace the story and devour the page, are to me better far than the wet sheets of the last new novel from the Ballantyne press, to say nothing of the Minerva press in Leadenhall street. It is like visiting the scenes of early youth. I think of the time "when I was in my father's house, and my path ran down with butter and honey,"—when I was a little, thoughtless child, and had no other wish or care but to con my daily task, and be happy!—Tom Jones, I remember, was the first work that broke the spell. It came down in numbers once a fortnight, in Cooke's pocket-edition, embellished with cuts. I had hitherto read only in school-books, and a tiresome ecclesiastical history (with the exception of Mrs. Radcliffe's Romance of the Forest): but this had a different relish with it,—"sweet in the mouth," though not "bitter in the belly." It smacked of the world I lived in, and in which I was to live—and showed me groups, "gay creatures" not "of the element," but of the earth; not "living in the clouds," but travelling the same road that I did; some that had passed on before me, and others that might soon overtake me. My heart had palpitated at the thoughts of a boarding-school ball, or gala-day at Midsummer or Christmas: but the world I had found out in Cooke's edition of the British Novelists was to me a dance through life, a perpetual gala-day. The sixpenny numbers of this work regularly contrived to leave off just in the middle of a sentence, and in the nick of a story, where Tom Jones discovers Square behind the blanket; or where Parson Adams, in the inextricable confusion of events, very undesignedly gets to bed to Mrs. Slip-slop. Let me caution the reader against this impression of Joseph Andrews; for there is a picture of Fanny in it which he should not set his heart on, lest he should never meet with any thing like it: or if he should, it would, perhaps, be better for him that he had not. It was just like —— ——! With what eagerness I used to look forward to the next number, and open the prints! Ah! never again shall I feel the enthusiastic delight with which I gazed at the figures, and anticipated the story and adventures of Major Bath and Commodore Trunnion, of Trim and my Uncle Toby, of Don

Quixote, and Sancho, and Dapple, of Gil Blas and Dame Lorenza Sephora, of Laura and the fair Lucretia, whose lips open and shut like buds of roses. To what nameless ideas did they give rise—with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page! Let me still recall them that they may breathe fresh life into me, and that I may live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over again! Talk of the *ideal!* This is the only true ideal—the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the spring-tide of human life.

> "Oh, Memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,
> And give those scenes thine everlasting life!"

The paradox with which I set out is, I hope, less startling than it was; the reader will, by this time, have been let into my secret. Much about the same time, or I believe rather earlier, I took a particular satisfaction in reading Chubb's Tracts, and I often think I will get them again to wade through. There is a high gusto of polemical divinity in them; and you fancy that you hear a club of shoemakers at Salisbury, debating a disputable text from one of St. Paul's Epistles in a workmanlike style, with equal shrewdness and pertinacity. I cannot say much for my metaphysical studies, into which I launched shortly after with great ardour, so as to make a toil of a pleasure. I was presently entangled in the briers and thorns of subtle distinctions—of "fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute," though I cannot add that "in their wandering maze I found no end;" for I did arrive at some very satisfactory and potent conclusions; nor will I go so far, however ungrateful the subject might seem, as to exclaim with Marlowe's Faustus, "Would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book"—that is, never studied such authors as Hartley, Hume, Berkeley, &c. Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding is, however, a work from which I never derived either pleasure or profit; and Hobbes, dry and powerful as he is, I did not read till long afterwards. I read a few poets, which did not much hit my taste, for I would have the reader understand, I am deficient in the faculty of imagination; but I fell early upon French romances and philosophy, and devoured them tooth-and-nail. Many a dainty repast have I made of the New Eloise ;—the description of the kiss ; the excursion on the water ; the letter of St. Preux, recalling the time of their first loves ; and the account of Julia's death ; these I read over and over again with unspeakable delight and wonder. Some years after, when I met with this work again, I found I had lost nearly my whole relish for it (except some few parts,) and was, I remember, very much mortified with the change in my taste, which I sought to attribute to the smallness and gilt edges of the edition I had bought, and its being perfumed with rose-leaves. Nothing could exceed the gravity, the solemnity with which I carried home and read the Dedication to the Social Contract, with some other pieces of the same author, which I had picked up at a stall in a coarse leathern cover. Of the Confessions I have spoken elsewhere and may repeat what I have said—" Sweet is the dew of thei memory, and pleasant the balm of their recollection !" Thei beauties are not " scattered like stray-gifts o'er the earth," but sown thick on the page, rich and rare. I wish I had never read the Emilius, or read it with less implicit faith. I had no occasion to pamper my natural aversion to affectation or pretence, by romantic and artificial means. I had better have formed myself on the model of Sir Fopling Flutter. There is a class of persons whose virtues and most shining qualities sink in, and are concealed by, an absorbent ground of modesty and reserve ; and such a one I do, without vanity, profess myself.* Now these are the very persons who are likely to attach themselves to the character of Emilius, and of whom it is sure to be the bane. This dull, phlegmatic, retiring humour is not in a fair way to be corrected, but confirmed and rendered desperate by being in that work held up as an object of imitation, as an example of simplicity and magnanimity—by coming upon us with all the recommendations of novelty, surprise, and superiority to the prejudices of the world—by being stuck upon a pedestal, made amiable, dazzling, a *leurre de dupe!* The reliance on solid worth which it inculcates, the preference of sober truth to gaudy tinsel, hangs like a mill-stone round the neck of the imagination—" a load to sink a navy"—impedes our progress, and blocks up every prospect in life. A man, to get on; to be successful, conspicuous, applauded, should not retire upon the centre of his conscious resources, but be always at the circumference of appearances. He must envelop himself in a halo of mystery—he must ride in an equipage of opinion—he must walk with a train of self-conceit following him—he must not strip himself to a buff-jerkin, to the doublet and hose of his real merits, but must surround himself with a *cortège* of prejudices, like the signs of the Zodiac—he must seem any thing but what he is, and then he may pass for any thing he pleases. The world love to be amused by hollow professions, to be deceived by flattering appearances, to live in a state of hallucination; and can forgive every thing but the plain, downright, simple honest truth—such as we see it chalked out in the character of Emilius.—To return from this digression, which is a little out of place here.

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* Nearly the same sentiment was wittily and happily expressed by a friend, who had some lottery-puffs, which he had been employed to write, returned on his hands for their too great severity of thought and classical terseness of style, and who observed on that occasion, that " Modest merit never can succeed !"

Books have in a great measure lost their power over me; nor can I revive the same interest in them as formerly. I perceive when a thing is good, rather than feel it. It is true,

> Marcian Colonna is a dainty book;

and the reading of Mr. Keats's Eve of Saint Agnes lately made me regret that I was not young again. The beautiful and tender images there conjured up, " come like shadows—so depart." The " tiger-moth's wings," which he has spread over his rich poetic blazonry, just flit across my fancy; the gorgeous twilight window which he has painted over again in his verse, to me " blushes" almost in vain " with blood of queens and kings." I know how I should have felt at one time in reading such passages; and that is all. The sharp luscious flavour, the fine *aroma* is fled, and nothing but the stalk, the bran, the husk of literature is left. If any one were to ask me what I read now, I might answer with my Lord Hamlet in the play—" Words, words, words."—" What is the matter?"—" *Nothing!*"—They have scarce a meaning. But it was not always so. There was a time when, to my thinking, every word was a flower or a pearl, like those which dropped from the mouth of the little peasant-girl in the fairy tale, or like those that fall from the great preacher in the Caledonian Chapel! I drank of the stream of knowledge that tempted, but did not mock my lips, as of the river of life freely. How eagerly I slaked my thirst of German sentiment, "as the hart that panteth for the water-springs;" how I bathed and revelled, and added my floods of tears to Goethe's Sorrows of Werter, and to Schiller's Robbers—

Giving my stock of more to that which had too much!

I read, and assented with all my soul to Coleridge's fine Sonnet, beginning—

"Schiller! that hour I would have wish'd to die,
If through the shuddering midnight I had sent.
From the dark dungeon of the tow'r time-rent,
That fearful voice, a famish'd father's cry!"

I believe I may date my insight into the mysteries of poetry from the commencement of my acquaintance with the authors of the Lyrical Ballads; at least, my discrimination of the higher sorts—not my predilection for such writers as Goldsmith or Pope: nor do I imagine they will say I got my liking for our Novelists or Comic Writers,—for the characters of Valentine, Tattle, or Miss Prue,—from them. If so, I must have got from them what they never had themselves. In points where poetic diction and conception are concerned, I may be at a loss, and liable to be imposed upon: but in forming an estimate of passages relating to common life and manners, I cannot think I am a plagiarist from any man. I there "know my cue without a prompter." I may say of such studies—*Intus et in cute*. I am just able to admire those literal touches of observation and description, which persons of loftier pretensions overlook and despise. I think I comprehend something of the characteristic part of Shakespear; and in him, indeed, all is characteristic, even the nonsense and poetry. I believe it was the celebrated Sir Humphrey Davy who used to say, that Shakespear was rather a metaphysician than a poet. At any rate, it was not ill said. I wish that I had sooner known the dramatic writers contemporary with Shakespear; for in looking them over about a year ago, I almost revived my old passion for reading, and my old delight in books, though they were very nearly new to me. The Periodical Essayists I read long ago. The Spectator I liked extremely: but the Tattler took my fancy most. I read the others soon after, the Rambler, the Adventurer, the World, the Connoisseur: I was not sorry to get to the end of them, and have no desire to go regularly through them again. I consider myself a thorough adept in Richardson. I like the longest of his novels best, and think no part of them tedious; nor should I ask to have any thing better to do than to read them from beginning to end, to take them up when I chose, and lay them down when I was tired, in some old family mansion in the country, till every word and syllable relating to the bright Clarissa, the divine Clementina, the beautiful Pamela, "with every trick and line of their sweet favour," were once more "graven in my heart's tables."* I have a sneaking kindness for Mackenzie's Julia de Roubigné—for the deserted mansion, and straggling gilliflowers on the mouldering garden-wall; and still more for his Man of Feeling; not that it is better, nor so good; but at the time I read it I sometimes thought of the heroine, Miss Walton, and of Miss —— together, and "that ligament, fine as it was, was never broken!" —One of the poets that I have always read with most pleasure, and can wander about in for ever with a sort of voluptuous indolence, is Spenser; and I like Chaucer even better. The only writer among the Italians I can pretend to any knowledge of, is Boccacio, and of him I cannot express half my admiration. His story of the Hawk I could read and think of from day to day, just as I would look at a picture of Titian's!

I remember, as long ago as the year 1798, going to a neighbouring town (Shrewsbury, where Farquhar has laid the plot of his

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* During the peace of Amiens, a young English officer, of the name of Lovelace, was presented at Bonaparte's levee. Instead of the usual question, "Where have you served, Sir!" the First Consul immediately addressed him, "I perceive your name, Sir, is the same as that of the hero of Richardson's Romance!" Here was a Consul. The young man's uncle, who was called Lovelace, told me this anecdote while we were stopping together at Calais. I had also been thinking that his was the same name as that of the hero of Richardson's Romance. This is one of my reasons for liking Bonaparte.

Recruiting Officer,) and bringing home with me, "at one proud swoop," a copy of Milton's Paradise Lost, and another of Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution—both which I have still; and I still recollect, when I see the covers, the pleasure with which I dipped into them as I returned with my double prize. I was set up for one while. That time is past "with all its giddy raptures:" but I am still anxious to preserve its memory, "embalmed with odours."—With respect to the first of these works, I would be permitted to remark here in passing, that it is a sufficient answer to the German criticism which has since been started against the character of Satan, (*viz.* that it is not one of disgusting deformity, or pure, defecated malice,) to say that Milton has there drawn, not the abstract principle of evil, not a devil incarnate, but a fallen angel. This is the scriptural account, and the poet has followed it. We may safely retain such passages as that well-known one—

> ——" His form had not yet lost
> All her original brightness; nor appear'd
> Less than archangel ruin'd, and the excess
> Of glory obscur'd"—

for the theory, which is opposed to them, "falls flat upon the grunsel edge, and shames its worshippers." Let us hear no more then of this monkish cant, and bigoted outcry for the restoration of the horns and tail of the devil!—Again, as to the other work, Burke's Reflections, I took a particular pride and pleasure in it, and read it to myself and others for months afterwards. I had reason for my prejudice in favour of this author. To understand an adversary is some praise: to admire him is more. I thought I did both: I knew I did one. From the first time I ever cast my eyes on any thing of Burke's (which was an extract from his Letter to a Noble Lord in a three-times-a-week paper, The St. James's Chronicle, in 1796,) I said to myself, "This is true eloquence: this is a man pouring out his mind on paper." All other style seemed to me pedantic and impertinent. Dr. Johnson's was walking on stilts; and even Junius's (who was at that time a favourite with me,) with all his terseness, shrunk up into little antithetic points and well-trimmed sentences. But

Burke's style was forked and playful as the lightning, crested like the serpent. He delivered plain things on a plain ground; but when he rose, there was no end of his flights and circumgyrations—and in this very Letter, "he, like an eagle in a dove-cot, fluttered *his* Volscians" (the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale*) "in Corioli." I did not care for his doctrines. I was then, and am still, proof against their contagion; but I admired the author, and was considered as not a very staunch partisan of the opposite side, though I thought myself that an abstract proposition was one thing—a masterly transition, a brilliant metaphor, another. I conceived too that he might be wrong in his main argument, and yet deliver fifty truths in arriving at a false conclusion. I remember Coleridge assuring me, as a poetical and political set-off to my sceptical admiration, that Wordsworth had written an Essay on Marriage, which, for manly thought and nervous expression, he deemed incomparably superior. As I had not, at that time, seen any specimens of Mr. Wordsworth's prose style, I could not venture my doubts on the subject. If there are greater prose-writers than Burke, they either lie out of my course of study, or are beyond my sphere of comprehension. I am too old to be a convert to a new mythology of genius. The niches are occupied, the tables are full. If such is still my admiration of this man's misapplied powers, what must it have been at a time when I myself was in vain trying, year after year, to write a single Essay, nay, a single page or sentence; when I regarded the wonders of his pen with the longing eyes of one who was dumb and a changeling; and when, to be able to convey the slightest conception of my meaning to others in words, was the height of an almost hopeless ambition! But I never measured others' excellences by my own defects: though a sense of my own incapacity, and of the steep, impassable ascent from me to them made me regard them with greater awe and fondness. I have thus run through most of my early studies and favourite authors, some of whom I have since criticised more at large. Whether those observations will survive me, I neither know nor do I much care: but to the works themselves, "worthy of all acceptation," and to the feelings they have always excited in me since I could distinguish a meaning in language, nothing shall ever prevent me from looking back with gratitude and triumph. To have lived in the cultivation of an intimacy with such works, and to have familiarly relished such names, is not to have lived quite in vain.

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* He is there called "Citizen Lauderdale." Is this the present Earl?

There are other authors whom I have never read, and yet whom I have frequently had a great desire to read, from some circumstance relating to them. Among these is Lord Clarendon's History of the Grand Rebellion, after which I have a hankering, from hearing it spoken of by good judges—from my interest in the events, and from having seen fine portraits of most of them. I like to read a well-penned character, and Clarendon is said to have been a master in this way. I should like to read Froissart's Chronicles, Hollinshed and Stowe, and Fuller's Worthies. I intend, whenever I can, to read Beaumont and Fletcher all through. There are fifty-two of their plays; and I have only read a dozen or fourteen of them. A Wife for a Month, and Thierry and Theodoret, are, I am told, delicious, and I can believe it. I should like to read the speeches in Thucydides, and Guicciardini's History of Florence, and Don Quixote in the original. I have often thought of reading the Loves of Persiles and Sigismunda, and the Galatea of the same author. But I somehow reserve them like "another Yarrow." I should also like to read the last new novel (if I could be sure it was so) of the Author of Waverley:—no one would be more glad than I to find it the best.

ESSAY XIX.

On Personal Character.

"Men palliate and conceal their original qualities, but do not extirpate them."—MONTAIGNE's *Essays.*

No one ever changes his character from the time he is two years old; nay, I might say, from the time he is two hours old. We may, with instruction and opportunity, mend our manners, or else alter them for the worse, "as the flesh and fortune shall serve;" but the character, the internal, original bias remains always the same, true to itself to the very last—

"And feels the ruling passion strong in death."

A very grave and dispassionate philosopher (the late celebrated chemist, Mr. Nicholson) was so impressed with the conviction of the instantaneous commencement and development of the character with the birth, that he published a long and amusing article in the Monthly Magazine, giving a detailed account of the progress, history, education, and tempers of two twins, up to the period of their being *eleven years old.* This is, perhaps, considering the matter too curiously, and would amount to a species of horoscopy, if we were to build on such premature indications; but the germ no doubt is there, though we must wait a little longer to see what form it takes. We need not in general wait long. The Devil soon betrays the cloven foot; or a milder and better spirit appears in its stead. A temper sullen or active, shy or bold, grave or lively, selfish or romantic, (to say nothing of quickness or dulness of apprehension,) is manifest very early; and imperceptibly, but irresistibly moulds our inclinations, habits, and pursuits through life. The greater or less degree of animal spirits,—of nervous irritability,—the complexion of the blood,—the proportion of "hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions fierce that strive for mastery,"—the Saturnine or the Mercurial,—the disposition to be affected by objects near or at a distance, or not at all,—to be struck with novelty, or to brood over deep-rooted impressions,—to indulge in laughter or in tears, the leaven of passion or of prudence that tempers this frail clay, is born with us, and never quits us. "It is not in our stars," in planetary influence, but neither is it owing "to ourselves, that we are thus or thus." The accession of knowledge, the pressure of circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, does little more than minister occasion to the first predisposing bias—than assist, like the dews of heaven, or retard, like the nipping north, the growth of the seed originally sown in our constitutions—than give a more or less decided expression to that personal character, the outlines of which nothing can alter. What I mean is, that Blifil and Tom Jones, for instance, by changing places, would never have changed characters. The one might, from circumstances and from the notions instilled into him, have become a little less selfish, and the other a little less extravagant; but with a trifling allowance of this sort, taking the proposition *cum grano salis*, they would have been just where they set out. Blifil would have been Blifil still, and Jones what nature intended him to be. I have made use of this example without any apology for its being a fictitious one, because I think good novels are the most authentic as well as most accessible repositories of the natural history and philosophy of the species.

I shall not borrow assistance or illustration from the organic system of Doctors Gall and Spurzheim, which reduces this question to a small compass and very distinct limits, because I do not understand or believe in it; but I think those who put faith in physiognomy at all, or imagine that the mind is stamped upon the countenance, must believe that there is such a thing as an essential difference of character in different individuals. We do not change our features with our situations; neither do we change the capacities or inclinations which lurk beneath them. A broad face does not become an oval nor a pug nose a Roman one, with the acquisition of an office, or the addition of a title. So neither is the pert, hard, unfeeling outline of character turned from selfishness and cunning to openness and generosity, by any softening of circumstances. If the face puts on an habitual smile in the sunshine of fortune, or if it suddenly lowers in the storms of adversity, do not trust too implicitly to appearances; the man is the same at bottom. The designing knave may sometimes wear a vizor, or "to beguile the time, look like the time;" but watch him narrowly, and you will detect him behind his mask! We recognize, after a length of years, the same well-known face that we were formerly acquainted with, changed by time, but the same in itself; and can trace the features of the boy in the full-grown man. Can we doubt that the character and thoughts have remained as much the same all that time; have borne the same image and superscription; have grown with the growth, and strengthened with the strength? In this sense, and in Mr. Wordsworth's phrase, "the child's the father of the man" surely enough. The same tendencies may not always be equally visible, but they are still in existence, and break out, whenever they dare and can, the more for being checked. Again, we often distinctly notice the same features, the same bodily peculiarities, the same look and gestures in different persons of the same family; and find this resemblance extending to collateral branches and through several generations, showing how strongly nature must have been warped and biassed in that particular direction at first. This pre-determination in the blood has its caprices too, and wayward as well as obstinate fits. The family-likeness sometimes skips over the next of kin or the nearest branch, and re-appears in all its singularity in a second or third cousin, or passes over the son to the grand-child. Where the pictures of the heirs and successors to a title or estate have been preserved for any length of time in Gothic halls and old fashioned mansions, the prevailing outline and character does not wear out, but may be traced through its numerous inflections and descents for centuries, like the winding of a river through an expanse of country. The ancestor of many a noble house has sat for the portraits of his youthful descendants; and still the soul of "Fairfax and the starry Vere," consecrated in Marvel's verse, may be seen mantling in the suffused features of some young court-beauty of the present day. The portrait of

Judge Jeffries, which was exhibited lately in the Gallery in Pall Mall—young, handsome, spirited, good-humoured, and totally unlike, at first view, what you would expect from the character, —was an exact likeness of two young men whom I knew some years ago, the living representatives of that family. It is curious that, consistently enough with the delineation in the portrait, old Evelyn should have recorded in his Memoirs, that "he saw the Chief-Justice Jeffries in a large company the night before, and that he thought he laughed, drank, and danced too much for a man who had that day condemned Algernon Sidney to the block." It is not always possible to foresee the tiger's spring, till we are in his grasp; the fawning, cruel eye dooms its prey, while it glitters! Features alone do not run in the blood; vices and virtues, genius and folly are transmitted through the same sure, but unseen channel. There is an involuntary, unaccountable family-character, as well as family-face; and we see it manifesting itself in the same way, with unbroken continuity, or by fits and starts. There shall be a regular breed of misers, of incorrigible old *hunkses* in a family, time out of mind; or the shame of the thing, and the hardships and restraint imposed upon him while young, shall urge some desperate spendthrift to wipe out the reproach upon his name by a course of extravagance and debauchery; and his immediate successors shall make his example an excuse for relapsing into the old jog-trot incurable infirmity, the grasping and pinching disease of the family again.* A person may be indebted for a nose or an eye, for a graceful carriage or a voluble discourse, to a great-aunt or uncle, whose existence he has scarcely heard of; and distant relations are surprised, on some casual introduction, to find each other an *alter idem*. Country cousins, who meet after they are grown up for the first time in London, often start at the likeness,—it is like looking at themselves in the glass—nay, they shall see, almost before they exchange a word, their own thoughts (as it were) staring them in the face, the same ideas, feelings, opinions, passions, prejudices, likings and antipathies; the same turn of mind and sentiment, the same foibles, peculiarities, faults, follies, misfortunes, consolations, the same self, the same every thing! And farther, this coincidence shall take place and be most remarkable, where not only no intercourse has previously been kept up, not even by letter or by common friends, but where the different branches of a family have been estranged for long years, and where the younger part in each have been brought up in totally different situations, with different studies, pursuits, expectations and opportunities. To assure me that this is owing to circumstances, is to assure me of a gratuitous absurdity, which you cannot know, and which I shall not believe. It is owing, not to circumstances, but to the force of kind, to the stuff of which our blood and humours are compounded being the same. Why should I and an old hair-brained uncle of mine fasten upon the same picture in a Collection, and talk of it for years after, though one of no particular "mark or likelihood" in itself, but for something congenial in the look to our own humour and way of seeing nature? Why should my cousin L—— and I fix upon the same book, Tristram Shandy—without comparing notes, have it "doubled down and dog-eared" in the same places, and live upon it as a sort of food that assimilated with our natural dispositions?—"Instinct, Hal, instinct!" They are fools who say otherwise, and have never studied nature or mankind, but in books and systems of philosophy. But, indeed, the colour of our lives is woven into the fatal thread at our births: our original sins and our redeeming graces are infused into us; nor is the bond, that confirms our destiny, ever cancelled.

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* "I know at this time a person of vast estate, who is the immediate descendant of a fine gentleman, but the great-grandson of a broker, in whom his ancestor is now revived. He is a very honest gentleman in his principles, but cannot for his blood talk fairly: he is heartily sorry for it; but he cheats by constitution, and over-reaches by instinct."—See this subject delightfully treated in the 75th Number of the Tattler, in an account of Mr. Bickerstaff's pedigree, on occasion of his sister's marriage.

> Beneath the hills, amid the flowery groves,
> The generations are prepared; the pangs,
> The internal pangs, are ready; the dread strife
> Of poor humanity's afflicted will
> Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny.

The "winged wounds" that rankle in our breasts to our latest day, were planted there long since, ticketed and labelled on the outside in small but indelible characters, written in our blood, "like that ensanguined flower inscribed with woe:" we are in the toils from the very first, hemmed in by the hunters; and these are our own passions, bred of our brain and humours, and that never leave us, but consume and gnaw the heart in our short life-time, as worms wait for us in the grave!

Critics and authors, who congregate in large cities, and see nothing of the world but a sort of phantasmagoria, to whom the numberless characters they meet in the course of a few hours are fugitive "as the flies of a summer," evanescent as the figures in a *camera obscura*, may talk very learnedly, and attribute the motions of the puppets to circumstances of which they are confessedly in total ignorance. They see character only in the bust, and have not room (for the crowd) to study it as a whole-length, that is, as it exists in reality. But those who trace things to their source, and proceed from individuals to generals, know better. School-boys, for example, who are early let into the secret, and see the seeds growing, are not only sound judges, but true prophets of character; so that the nick-names they give their play-fellows usually stick by them ever after. The gossips in country-towns, also, who study human nature, not merely in the history of the individual, but in the genealogy of the race, know the comparative anatomy of the minds of a whole neighbourhood to a tittle, where to look for marks and defects,—explain a vulgarity by a cross in the breed, or a foppish air in a young tradesman by his grandmother's marriage with a dancing-master,—and are the only practical conjurors and expert decypherers of the determinate lines of true and supposititious character.

The character of women (I should think it will at this time of day be granted) differs essentially from that of men, not less so than their shape or the texture of their skin. It has been said indeed, "most women have no character at all,"—and on the other hand, the fair and eloquent authoress of the Rights of Women was for establishing the masculine pretensions and privileges of her sex on a perfect equality with ours. I shall leave Pope and Mary Wolstonecroft to settle that point between them. I should laugh at any one who told me that the European, the Asiatic, and the African character were the same. I no more believe it than I do that black is the same colour as white, or that a straight line is a crooked one. We see in whole nations and large classes the physiognomies, and I should suppose ("not to speak it profanely") the general characters of different animals with which we are acquainted, as of the fox, the wolf, the hog, the goat, the dog, the monkey; and I suspect this analogy, whether perceived or not, has as prevailing an influence on their habits and actions, as any theory of moral sentiments taught in the schools. Rules and precautions may, no doubt, be applied to counteract the excesses and overt demonstrations of any such characteristic infirmity; but still the disease will be in the mind, an impediment, not a help to virtue. An exception is usually taken to all national or general reflections, as unjust and illiberal, because they cannot be true of every individual. It is not meant that they are; and besides, the same captious objection is not made to the handsome things that are said of whole bodies and classes of men. A lofty panegyric, a boasted virtue will fit the inhabitants of an entire district to a hair; the want of strict universality, of philosophical and abstract truth is no difficulty here; but if you hint at an obvious vice or defect, this is instantly construed into a most unfair and partial view of the case, and each defaulter throws the imputation from himself and his country with scorn. Thus you may praise the generosity of the English, the prudence of the Scotch, the hospitality of the Irish, as long as you please, and not a syllable is whispered against these sweeping expressions of admiration; but reverse the picture, hold up to censure, or only glance at the unfavourable side of each character, (and they themselves admit that they have a distinguishing and generic character as a people,) and you are assailed by the most violent clamours and a confused Babel of noises, as a disseminator of unfounded prejudices, or a libeller of human nature. I am sure there is nothing reasonable in this.—Harsh and disagreeable qualities wear out in nations, as in individuals, from time and intercourse with the world, but it is at the expense of their intrinsic excellences. The vices of softness and effeminacy sink deeper with age, like thorns in the flesh. Single acts or events often determine the fate of mortals, yet may have nothing to do with their general deserts or failings. He who is said to be cured of any glaring infirmity may be suspected never to have had it; and lastly, it may be laid down as a general rule, that mankind improve, by means of luxury and civilization, in social manners, and become more depraved in what relates to personal habits and character. There are few nations, as well as few men (with the exception of tyrants) that are cruel and voluptuous, immersed in pleasure, and bent on inflicting pain on others, at the same time. Ferociousness is the characteristic of barbarous ages, licentiousness of more refined periods.*

I shall not undertake to decide exactly how far the original character may be modified by the general progress of society, or by particular circumstances happening to the individual; but I think the alteration (be it what it may) is more apparent than real, more in conduct than in feeling. I will not deny, that an extreme and violent difference of circumstances (as that between the savage and civilized state) will supersede the common distinctions of character, and prevent certain dispositions and sentiments from ever developing themselves. Yet with reference to this, I would observe, in the first place, that in the most opposite ranks and conditions of life, we find qualities displaying themselves, which we should have least expected,—grace in a cottage, humanity in a bandit, sincerity in courts; and secondly, in ordinary cases, and in the mixed mass of human affairs, the mind contrives to lay hold of those circumstances and motives which suit its own bias and confirm its natural disposition, whatever it may be, gentle or rough, vulgar or refined, spirited or cowardly, open-hearted or cunning. The will is not blindly impelled by outward accidents, but selects the impressions by which it chooses to be governed, with great dexterity and perseverance. Or the machine may be at the disposal of fortune: the man is still his own master. The soul, under the pressure of circumstances, does not lose its original spring; but, as soon as the pressure is removed, recoils with double violence to its first position. That which any one has been long learning unwillingly, he unlearns with proportionable eagerness and haste. Kings have been said to be incorrigible to experience. The maxim might be extended, without injury, to the benefit of their subjects, for every man is a king (with all the pride and obstinacy of one) in his own little world. It is only lucky that the rest of the species are not answerable for his caprices! We laugh at the warnings and advice of others; we resent the lessons of adversity, and lose no time in letting it appear that we have escaped from its importunate hold. I do not think, with every assistance from reason and circumstances, that the slothful ever becomes active, the coward brave, the headstrong prudent, the fickle steady, the mean generous, the coarse delicate, the ill-tempered amiable, or the knave honest; but that the restraint of necessity and appearances once taken away, they would relapse into their former and real character again:—*Cucullus non facit monachum.* Manners, situation, example, fashion, have a prodigious influence on exterior deportment. But do they penetrate much deeper? The thief will not steal by day; but his having this command over himself does not do away his character or calling. The priest cannot indulge in certain irregularities; but unless his pulse beats temperately from the first, he will only be playing a part through life. Again, the soldier cannot shrink from his duty in a dastardly manner; but if he has not naturally steady nerves and strong resolution, except in the field of battle, he may be fearful as a woman, though covered with scars and honour. The judge must be disinterested and above suspicion; yet should he have from nature an itching palm, an eye servile and greedy of office, he will somehow contrive to indemnify his private conscience out of his public principle, and husband a reputation for legal integrity, as a stake to play the game of political profligacy with more advantage! There is often a contradiction in character, which is composed of various and unequal parts; and hence there will arise an appearance of fickleness and inconsistency. A man may be sluggish by the father's side, and of a restless and uneasy temper by the mother's; and he may favour either of these inherent dispositions according to circumstances. But he will not have changed his character, any more than a man who sometimes lives in one apartment of a house and then takes possession of another, according to whim or convenience, changes his habitation. The simply phlegmatic never turns to the truly

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* Fideliter didicisse ingenuas artes
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.

The same maxim does not establish the purity of morals that infers their mildness.

"fiery quality." So, the really gay or trifling never become thoughtful and serious. The light-hearted wretch takes nothing to heart. He, on whom (from natural carelessness of disposition) "the shot of accident and dart of chance" fall like drops of oil on water, so that he brushes them aside with heedless hand and smiling face, will never be roused from his volatile indifference to meet inevitable calamities. He may try to laugh them off, but will not put himself to any inconvenience to prevent them. I know a man that, if a tiger were to jump into his room, would only play off some joke, some "quip, or crank, or wanton wile" upon him. Mortifications and disappointments may break such a person's heart; but they will be the death of him ere they will make him provident of the future, or willing to forego one idle gratification of the passing moment for any consideration whatever. The dilatory man never becomes punctual. Resolution is of no avail; for the very essence of the character consists in this, that the present impression is of more efficacy than any previous resolution. I have heard it said of a celebrated writer, that if he had to get a reprieve from the gallows for himself or a friend (with leave be it spoken,) and was to be at a certain place at a given time for this purpose, he would be a quarter of an hour behind-hand. What is to be done in this case? Can you talk or argue a man out of his humour? You might as well attempt to talk or argue him out of a lethargy or a fever. The disease is in the blood: you may see it (if you are a curious observer) meandering in his veins, and reposing on his eye-lids! Some of our foibles are laid in the constitution of our bodies; others in the structure of our minds, and both are irremediable. The vain man, who is full of himself, is never cured of his vanity, but looks for admiration to the last, with a restless, suppliant eye, in the midst of contumely and contempt; the modest man never grows vain from flattery, or unexpected applause, for he sees himself in the diminished scale of other things. He will not "have his nothings monstered." He knows how much he himself wants, how much others have; and till you can alter this conviction in him, or make him drunk by infusing some new poison, some celestial *ichor* into his veins, you cannot make a coxcomb of him. He is too well aware of the truth of what has been said, that "the wisest amongst us is a fool in some things, as the lowest amongst men has some just notions, and therein is as wise as Socrates; so that every man resembles a statue made to stand against a wall, or in a niche; on one side it is a Plato, an Apollo, a Demosthenes; on the other, it is a rough, unformed piece of stone."* Some persons of my acquaintance, who think themselves *teres et rotundus*, and armed at all points with perfections, would not be much inclined to give in to this sentiment, the modesty of which is only equalled by its sense and ingenuity. The man of sanguine temperament is seldom weaned from his castles in the air; nor can you, by virtue of any theory, convert the cold, careful calculator into a wild enthusiast. A self-tormentor is never satisfied, come what will. He always apprehends the worst, and is indefatigable in conjuring up the apparition of danger. He is uneasy at his own good fortune, as it takes from his favourite topic of repining and complaint. Let him succeed to his heart's content in all that is reasonable or important, yet if there is any one thing (and *that* he is sure to find out) in which he does not get on, this embitters all the rest. I know an instance. Perhaps it is myself. Again, a surly man, in spite of warning, neglects his own interest, and will do so, because he has more pleasure in disobliging you than in serving himself. "A friendly man will show himself friendly," to the last; for those who are said to have been spoiled by prosperity were never really good for any thing. A good-natured man never loses his native happiness of disposition: good temper is an estate for life; and a man born with common sense rarely turns out a very egregious fool. It is more common to see a fool become wise, that is, set up for wisdom, and be taken at his word by fools. We frequently judge of a man's intellectual pretensions by the number of books he writes; of his eloquence by the number of speeches he makes; of his capacity for business, by the number of offices he holds. These are not true tests. Many a celebrated author is a known blockhead (between friends); and many a minister of state, whose gravity and self-importance pass with the world for depth of thought and weight of public care, is a laughing-stock to his very servants and dependants.* The talents of some men, indeed, which might not otherwise have had a field to display themselves, are called out by extraordinary situations, and rise with the occasion; but for all the routine and mechanical preparation, the pomp and parade and big looks of great statesmen, or what is called merely *filling office*, a very shallow capacity, with a certain immoveableness of countenance, is, I should suppose, sufficient, from what I have seen. Such political machines are not so good as the Mock-Duke in the Honey-Moon. As to genius and capacity for the works of art and science, all that a man really excels in, is his own and incommunicable; what he borrows from others he has in an inferior degree, and it is never what his fame rests on. Sir Joshua observes, that Raphael, in his latter pictures, proved that he had learnt in some measure the colouring of Titian. If he had learnt it quite, the merit would still have been Titian's; but he did not learn it, and never would. But his expression (his glory and his excellence) was what he had within himself, first and last; and this it was that seated him on the pinnacle of fame, a pre-eminence that no artist, without an equal warrant from nature and genius, will ever deprive him of. With respect to indications of early genius for particular things, I will just mention, that I myself know an instance of a little boy who could catch the hardest tunes, when between two and three years old, without any assistance but hearing them played on a hand-organ in the street; and who followed the exquisite pieces of Mozart, played to him for the first time, so as to fall in like an echo at the close. Was this accident, or education, or natural aptitude? I think the last. All the presumptions are for it, and there are none against it.

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* Richardson's Works, *On the Science of a Connoisseur*, p. 212.

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* The reputation is not the man. Yet all true reputation begins and ends in the opinion of a man's intimate friends. He *is* what they think him, and in the last result will be thought so by others. Where there is no solid merit to bear the pressure of personal contact, fame is but a vapour raised by accident or prejudice, and will soon vanish like a vapour or a noisome stench. But he who appears to those about him what he would have the world think him, from whom every one that approaches him in whatever circumstances brings something away to confirm the loud rumour of the popular voice, is alone great in spite of fortune. The malice of friendship, the littleness of curiosity, is as severe a test as the impartiality and enlarged views of history.

In fine, do we not see how hard certain early impressions, or prejudices acquired later, are to overcome? Do we not say, habit is a second nature? And shall we not allow the force of nature itself? If the real disposition is concealed for a time and tampered with, how readily it breaks out with the first excuse or opportunity! How soon does the drunkard forget his resolution and constrained sobriety, at the sight of the foaming tankard and blazing hearth! Does not the passion for gaming, in which there had been an involuntary pause, return like a madness all at once? It would be needless to offer instances of so obvious a truth. But if this superinduced nature is not to be got the better of by reason or prudence, who shall pretend to set aside the original one by prescription and management? Thus, if we turn to the characters of women, we find that the shrew, the jilt, the coquette, the wanton, the intriguer, the liar, continue all their lives the same. Meet them after the lapse of a quarter or half a century, and they are still infallibly at their old work. No rebuke from experience, no lessons of misfortune make the least impression on them. On they go; and, in fact, they can go on in no other way. They try other things, but it will not do. They are like fish out of water, except in the element of their favourite vices. They might as well not be, as cease to be what they are by nature and custom. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Neither do these wretched persons find any satisfaction or consciousness of their power, but in being a plague and a torment to themselves and every one else as long as they can. A good sort of woman is a character more rare than any of these, but it is equally durable. Look at the head of Hogarth's Idle Apprentice in the boat, holding up his fingers as horns at Cuckold's Point, and ask what penitentiary, what prison-discipline would change the form of his forehead "villanous low," or the conceptions lurking within it? Nothing —no mother's fearful warnings,—nor the formidable precautions of that wiser and more loving mother, his country! That fellow is still to be met with somewhere in our time. Is he a spy, a jack-ketch, or an underling of office? In truth, almost all the characters in Hogarth are of the class of incorrigibles; so that I often wonder what has become of some of them. Have the worst of them been cleared out, like the breed of noxious animals? Or have they been swept away, like locusts, in the whirlwind of the French Revolution? Or has Mr. Bentham put them into his Panopticon: from which they have come out, so that nobody knows them, like the chimney-sweeper boy at Sadler's Wells, that was thrown into a cauldron and came out a little dapper volunteer? I will not deny that some of them may, like Chaucer's characters, have been modernized a little; but I think I could re-translate a few of them into their mother-tongue, the original honest *black-letter*. We may refine, we may disguise, we may equivocate, we may compound for our vices, without getting rid of them; as we change our liquors, but do not leave off drinking. We may, in this respect, look forward to a decent and moderate, rather than a thorough and radical reform. Or (without going deep into the political question) I conceive we may improve the mechanism, if not the texture of society; that is, we may improve the physical circumstances of individuals and their general relations to the state, though the internal character, like the grain in wood, or the sap in trees, that still rises, bend them how you will, may remain nearly the same. The clay that the potter uses may be of the same quality, coarse or fine in itself, though he may mould it into vessels of very different shape or beauty. Who shall alter the stamina of national character by any systematic process? Who shall make the French respectable, or the English amiable? Yet the author of THE YEAR 2500* has done it! Suppose public spirit to become the general principle of action in the community—how would it show itself? Would it not then become the fashion, like loyalty, and have its apes and parrots, like loyalty? The man of principle would no longer be distinguished from the crowd, the *servum pecus imitatorum*. There is a cant of democracy as well as of aristocracy; and we have seen both triumphant in our day. The Jacobin of 1794 was the Anti-Jacobin of 1814. The loudest chaunters of the Pæans of liberty were the loudest applauders of the restored doctrine of divine right. They drifted with the stream, they sailed before the breeze in either case.

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* Mercier.

The politician was changed; the man was the same, the very same!—But enough of this.

I do not know any moral to be deduced from this view of the subject but one, namely, that we should mind our own business, cultivate our good qualities, if we have any, and irritate ourselves less about the absurdities of other people, which neither we nor they can help. I grant there is something in what I have said, which might be made to glance towards the doctrines of original sin, grace, election, reprobation, or the Gnostic principle that acts alone did not determine the virtue or vice of the character; and in those doctrines, so far as they are deducible from what I have said, I agree—but always with a salvo.

ESSAY XX.

On Vulgarity and Affectation.

Few subjects are more nearly allied than these two—vulgarity and affectation. It may be said of them truly that "thin partitions do their bounds divide." There cannot be a surer proof of a low origin or of an innate meanness of disposition, than to be always talking and thinking of being genteel. We must have a strong tendency to that which we are always trying to avoid: whenever we pretend, on all occasions, a mighty contempt for any thing, it is a pretty clear sign that we feel ourselves very nearly on a level with it. Of the two classes of people, I hardly know which is to be regarded with most distaste, the vulgar aping the genteel, or the genteel constantly sneering at and endeavouring to distinguish themselves from the vulgar. These two sets of persons are always thinking of one another; the lower of the higher with envy, the more fortunate of their less happy neighbours with contempt. They are habitually placed in opposition to each other; jostle in their pretensions at every turn; and the same objects and train of thought (only reserved by the relative situation of either party) occupy their whole time and attention. The one are straining every nerve and outraging common sense, to be thought genteel; the others have no other object or idea in their heads than *not* to be thought vulgar. This is but poor spite; a very pitiful style of ambition. To be merely not that which one heartily despises, is a very humble claim to superiority: to despise what one really is, is still worse. Most of the characters in Miss Burney's novels, the Branghtons, the Smiths, the Dubsters, the Cecilias, the Delvilles, &c. are well met in this respect, and much of a piece: the one half are trying not to be taken for themselves, and the other half not to be taken for the first. They neither of them have any pretensions of their own, or real standard of worth. "A feather will turn the scale of their avoirdupois:" though the fair authoress was not aware of the metaphysical identity of her principal and subordinate characters. Affectation is the master-key to both.

Gentility is only a more select and artificial kind of vulgarity. It cannot exist but by a sort of borrowed distinction. It plumes itself up and revels in the homely pretensions of the mass of mankind. It judges of the worth of every thing by name, fashion, opinion; and hence, from the conscious absence of real qualities or sincere satisfaction in itself, it builds its supercilious and fantastic conceit on the wretchedness and wants of others. Violent antipathies are always suspicious, and betray a secret affinity. The difference between the "Great Vulgar and the Small" is mostly in outward circumstances. The coxcomb criticises the dress of the clown, as the pedant cavils at the bad grammar of the illiterate, or as the prude is shocked at the backslidings of her frail acquaintance. Those who have the fewest resources in themselves, naturally seek the food of their self-love elsewhere. The most ignorant people find most to laugh at in strangers: scandal and satire prevail most in country-places; and a propensity to ridicule every the slightest or most palpable deviation from what we happen to approve, ceases with the progress of common sense and decency.* True worth does not exult in the faults and deficiency of others; as true refinement turns away from grossness and deformity, instead of being tempted to indulge in an unmanly triumph over it. Raphael would not faint away at the daubing of a sign-post, nor Homer hold his head the higher for being in the company of a Grub-street bard. Real power, real excellence does not seek for a foil in imperfection; nor fear contamination from coming in contact with that which is coarse and homely. It reposes on itself, and is equally free from spleen and affectation. But the spirit of gentility is the mere essence of spleen and affectation;—of affected delight in its own *would-be* qualifications, and of ineffable disdain poured out upon the involuntary blunders or accidental disadvantages of those whom it chooses to treat as its inferiors.—Thus a fashionable Miss titters till she is ready to burst her sides at the uncouth shape of a bonnet, or the abrupt drop of a courtesy (such as Jeanie Deans would make) in a country-girl who comes to be hired by her mamma as a servant:—yet to show how little foundation there is for this hysterical expression of her extreme good opinion of herself and contempt for the untutored rustic, she would herself the next day be delighted with the very same shaped bonnet if brought her by a French milliner and told it was all the fashion, and in a week's time will become quite familiar with the maid, and chatter with her (upon equal terms) about caps and ribbons and lace by the hour together. There is no difference between them but that of situation in the kitchen or in the parlour: let circumstances bring them together, and they fit like hand and glove. It is like mistress, like maid. Their talk, their thoughts, their dreams, their likings and dislikes are the same. The mistress's head runs continually on dress and finery, so does the maid's: the young lady longs to ride in a coach and six, so does the maid, if she could: Miss forms a *beau ideal* of a lover with black eyes and rosy cheeks, which does not differ from that of her attendant: both like a smart man, the one the foot-man and the other his master, for the same reason: both like handsome furniture and fine houses: both apply the terms, *shocking* and *disagreeable*, to the same things and persons: both have a great notion of balls, plays, treats, song-books and love-tales: both like a wedding or a christening, and both would give their little fingers to see a coronation, with this difference, that the one has a chance of getting a seat at it, and the other is dying with envy that she has not. Indeed, this last is a ceremony that delights equally the greatest monarch and the meanest of his subjects, the vilest of the rabble. Yet this which is the height of gentility and the consummation of external distinction and splendour, is, I should say, a vulgar ceremony. For what degree of refinement, of capacity, of virtue, is required in the individual who is so distinguished, or is necessary to his enjoying this idle and imposing parade of his person? Is he delighted with the state-coach and gilded pannels? So is the poorest wretch that gazes at it. Is he struck with the spirit, the beauty and symmetry of the eight cream-coloured horses? There is not one of the immense multitude, who flock to see the sight from town or country, St. Giles's or Whitechapel, young or old, rich or poor, gentle or simple, who does not agree to admire the same object. Is he delighted with the yeomen of the guard, the military escort, the groups of ladies, the badges of sovereign power, the kingly crown, the marshal's truncheon and the judge's robe, the array that precedes and follows him, the crowded streets, the windows hung with eager looks? So are the mob, for they "have eyes and see them!" There is no one faculty of mind or body, natural or acquired, essential to the principal figure in this procession, more than is common to the meanest and most despised attendant on it. A wax-work figure would answer the same purpose: a Lord Mayor of London has as much tinsel to be proud of. I would rather have a king do something that no one else has the power or magnanimity to do, or say something that no one else has the wisdom to say, or look more handsome, more thoughtful, or benign than any one else in his dominions. But I see nothing to raise one's idea of him in his being made a show of: if the pageant would do as well without the man, the man would do as well without the pageant! Kings have been declared to be "lovers of low company:" and this maxim, besides the reason sometimes assigned for it, viz. that they meet with less opposition to their wills from such persons, will I suspect be found to turn at last on the consideration I am here stating, that they also meet with more sympathy in their tastes. The most ignorant and thoughtless have the greatest admiration of the baubles, the outward symbols of pomp and power, the sound and show, which are the habitual delight and mighty prerogative of kings. The stupidest slave worships the gaudiest tyrant. The same gross motives appeal to the same gross capacities, flatter the pride of the superior and excite the servility of the dependant: whereas a higher reach of moral and intellectual refinement might seek in vain for higher proofs of internal worth and inherent majesty in the object of its idolatry, and not finding the divinity lodged within, the unreasonable expectation raised would probably end in mortification on both sides! There is little to distinguish a king from his subjects but the rabble's shout—if he loses that and is reduced to the forlorn hope of gaining the suffrages of the wise and good, he is of all men the most miserable. —But enough of this.

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* "If an European, when he has cut off his beard and put false hair on his head, or bound up his own natural hair in regular hard knots, as unlike nature as he can possibly make it; and after having rendered them immoveable by the help of the fat of hogs, has covered the whole with flour, laid on by a machine with the utmost regularity; if when thus attired he issues forth, and meets a Cherokee Indian, who has bestowed as much time at his toilet, and laid on with equal care and attention his yellow and red ochre on particular parts of his forehead or cheeks, as he judges most becoming; whoever of these two despises the other for his attention to the fashion of his country, which ever first feels himself provoked to laugh, is the barbarian."—Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*, Vol. I. p. 231, 2.

"I like it," says Miss Branghton* in Evelina, (meaning the Opera,) "because it is not vulgar." That is, she likes it, not because there is any thing to like in it, but because other people are prevented from liking or knowing any thing about it. Janus Weathercock, Esq., laugheth to scorn and despitefully entreateth and hugely condemneth my dramatic articles in the London Magazine, for a like reason. I must therefore make an example of him *in terrorem* to all such hypercritics. He finds fault with me and calls my taste vulgar, because I go to Sadler's Wells ("a place he has heard of"—O Lord, Sir!)—because I notice the Miss Dennetts, "great favourites with the Whitechapel orders"—praise Miss Valancy, "a bouncing Columbine at Astley's and them there places, as his barber informs him" (has he no way of establishing himself in his own good opinion but by triumphing over his barber's bad English?)—and finally, because I recognize the existence of the Cobourg and the Surrey theatres, at the names of which he cries "Faugh" with great significance, as if he had some personal disgust at them, and yet he would be supposed never to have entered them. It is not his cue as a well-bred critic. *C'est beau ça.* Now this appears to me a very crude, unmeaning, indiscriminate, wholesale and vulgar way of thinking. It is prejudging things in the lump, by names and places and classes, instead of judging of them by what they are in themselves, by their real qualities and shades of distinction. There is no selection, truth, or delicacy in such a mode of proceeding. It is affecting ignorance, and making it a title to wisdom. It is a vapid assumption of superiority. It is exceeding impertinence. It is rank coxcombry. It is nothing in the world else. To condemn because the multitude admire is as essentially vulgar as to admire because they admire. There is no exercise of taste or judgment in either case: both are equally repugnant to good sense, and of the two I should prefer the good-natured side. I would as soon agree with my barber as differ from him: and why should I make a point of reversing the sentence of the Whitechapel orders? Or how can it affect my opinion of the merits of an actor at the Cobourg or the Surrey theatres, that these theatres are in or out of the Bills of Mortality? This is an easy, shorthand way of judging, as gross as it is mechanical. It is not a difficult matter to settle questions of taste by consulting the map of London, or to prove your liberality by geographical distinctions. Janus jumbles things together strangely. If he had seen Mr. Kean in a provincial theatre, at Exeter or Taunton, he would have thought it vulgar to admire him: but when he had been stamped in London, Janus would no doubt show his discernment and the subtlety of his tact for the display of character and passion, by not being behind the fashion. The Miss Dennetts are "little unformed girls," for no other reason than because they danced at one of the minor theatres: let them but come out on the Opera boards, and let the beauty and fashion of the season greet them with a fairy shower of delighted applause, and they would outshine Milanie "with the foot of fire." His gorge rises at the mention of a certain quarter of the town: whatever passes current in another, he "swallows total grist unsifted, husks and all." This is not taste, but folly. At this rate, the hackney-coachman who drives him, or his horse *Contributor* whom he has introduced as a select personage to the vulgar reader, knows as much of the matter as he does.—In a word, the answer to all this in the first instance is to say what vulgarity is. Now its essence, I imagine, consists in taking manners, actions, words, opinions, on trust from others, without examining one's own feelings or weighing the merits of the case. It is coarseness or shallowness of taste, arising from want of individual refinement, together with the confidence and presumption inspired by example and numbers.

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* This name was originally spelt Braughton in the manuscript, and was altered to Branghton by a mistake of the printer. Branghton, however, was thought a good name for the occasion, and was suffered to stand.

It may be defined to be a prostitution of the mind or body to ape the more or less obvious defects of others, because by so doing we shall secure the suffrages of those we associate with. To affect a gesture, an opinion, a phrase, because it is the rage with a large number of persons, or to hold it in abhorrence because another set of persons, very little, if at all, better informed, cry it down to distinguish themselves from the former, is in either case equal vulgarity and absurdity.—A thing is not vulgar merely because it is common. 'Tis common to breathe, to see, to feel, to live. Nothing is vulgar that is natural, spontaneous, unavoidable. Grossness is not vulgarity, ignorance is not vulgarity, awkwardness is not vulgarity: but all these become vulgar when they are affected and shown off on the authority of others, or to fall in with *the fashion* or the company we keep. Caliban is coarse enough, but surely he is not vulgar. We might as well spurn the clod under our feet, and call it vulgar. Cobbett is coarse enough, but he is not vulgar. He does not belong to the herd. Nothing real, nothing original can be vulgar: but I should think an imitator of Cobbett a vulgar man. Emery's Yorkshireman is vulgar, because he is a Yorkshireman. It is the cant and gibberish, the cunning and low life of a particular district; it has "a stamp exclusive and provincial." He might "gabble most brutishly" and yet not fall under the letter of the definition: but "his speech bewrayeth him," his dialect (like the jargon of a Bond-street lounger) is the damning circumstance. If he were a mere blockhead, it would not signify: but he thinks himself a *knowing hand*, according to the notions and practices of those with whom he was brought up, and which he thinks *the go* everywhere. In a word, this character is not the offspring of untutored nature, but of bad habits; it is made up of ignorance and conceit. It has a mixture of *slang* in it. All slang phrases are for the same reason vulgar; but there is nothing vulgar in the common English idiom. Simplicity is not vulgarity; but the looking to affectation of any sort for distinction is. A cockney is a vulgar character, whose imagination cannot wander beyond the suburbs of the metropolis: so is a fellow who is always thinking of the High-street, Edinburgh. We want a name for this last character. An opinion is vulgar that is stewed in the rank breath of the rabble: nor is it a bit purer or more refined for having passed through the well-cleansed teeth of a whole court. The inherent vulgarity is in having no other feeling on any subject than the crude, blind, headlong, gregarious notion acquired by sympathy with the mixed multitude or with a fastidious minority, who are just as insensible to the real truth, and as indifferent to every thing but their own frivolous and vexatious pretensions. The upper are not wiser than the lower orders, because they resolve to differ from them. The fashionable have the advantage of the unfashionable in nothing but the fashion. The true vulgar are the *servum pecus imitatorum*—the herd of pretenders to what they do not feel and to what is not natural to them, whether in high or low life. To belong to any class, to move in any rank or sphere of life, is not a very exclusive distinction or test of refinement. Refinement will in all classes be the exception, not the rule; and the exception may fall out in one class as well as another. A king is but an hereditary title. A nobleman is only one of the House of Peers. To be a knight or alderman is confessedly a vulgar thing. The king the other day made Sir Walter Scott a baronet, but not all the power of the Three Estates could make another Author of Waverley. Princes, heroes are often common-place people: Hamlet was not a vulgar character, neither was Don Quixote. To be an author, to be a painter, is nothing. It is a trick, it is a trade.

> "An author! 'tis a venerable name:
> How few deserve it, yet what numbers claim!"

Nay, to be a Member of the Royal Academy, or a Fellow of the Royal Society, is but a vulgar distinction. But to be a Virgil, a Milton, a Raphael, a Claude, is what fell to the lot of humanity but once! I do not think *they* were vulgar people, though for any thing I know to the contrary the first Lord of the Bed-chamber may be a very vulgar man: for any thing I know to the contrary, he may not be so.—Such are pretty much my notions of gentility and vulgarity.

There is a well-dressed and an ill-dressed mob, both which I hate. *Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo.* The vapid affectation of the one is to me even more intolerable than the gross insolence and brutality of the other. If a set of low-lived fellows are noisy, rude, and boisterous, to show their disregard of the company, a set of fashionable coxcombs are, to a nauseous degree, finical and effeminate, to show their thorough breeding. The one are governed by their feelings, however coarse and misguided, which is something: the others consult only appearances, which are nothing, either as a test of happiness or virtue. Hogarth in his prints has trimmed the balance of pretension between the downright blackguard and the *soi-disant* fine gentleman unanswerably. It does not appear in his moral demonstrations (whatever it may do in the genteel letter-writing of Lord Chesterfield, or the chivalrous rhapsodies of Burke,) that vice by losing all its grossness loses half its evil. It becomes more contemptible, not less disgusting. What is there in common, for instance, between his beaux and belles, his rakes and his coquets, and the men and women, the true heroïc and ideal characters in Raphael? But his people of fashion and quality are just upon a par with the low, the selfish, the *unideal* characters in the contrasted view of human life, and are often the very same characters, only changing places. If the lower ranks are actuated by envy and uncharitableness towards the upper, the latter have scarcely any feelings but of pride, contempt, and aversion to the lower. If the poor would pull down the rich to get at their good things, the rich would tread down the poor as in a vine-press, and squeeze the last shilling out of their pockets and the last drop of blood out of their veins. If the headstrong self-will and unruly turbulence of a common ale-house are shocking, what shall we say to the studied insincerity, the inspired want of common sense, the callous insensibility of the drawing-room and *boudoir?* I would rather see the feelings of our common nature (for they are the same at bottom) expressed in the most naked and unqualified way, than see every feeling of our nature suppressed, stifled, hermetically sealed under the smooth, cold, glittering varnish of pretended refinement and conventional politeness. The one may be corrected by being better informed; the other is incorrigible, wilful, heartless depravity. I cannot describe the contempt and disgust I have felt at the tone of what would be thought good company, when I have witnessed the sleek, smiling, glossy, gratuitous assumption of superiority to every feeling of humanity, honesty or principle, making part of the etiquette, the mental and moral *costume* of the table, and every profession of toleration or favour for the lower orders, that is, for the great mass of our fellow-creatures, treated as an indecorum and breach of the harmony of well-regulated society. In short, I prefer a bear-garden to the adder's den. Or to put the case in its extremest point of view, I have more patience with men in a rude state of nature outraging the human form, than I have with apes "making mops and mows" at the extravagances they have first provoked. I can endure the brutality (as it is termed) of mobs better than the inhumanity of courts. The violence of the one rages like a fire; the insidious policy of the other strikes like a pestilence, and is more fatal and inevitable. The slow poison of despotism is worse than the convulsive struggles of anarchy. "Of all evils," says Hume, "anarchy is the shortest-lived." The one may "break out like a wild overthrow;" but the other from its secret, sacred stand operates unseen, and undermines the happiness of kingdoms for ages, lurks in the hollow cheek and stares you in the face in the ghastly eye of want and agony and woe. It is dreadful to hear the noise and uproar of an infuriated multitude stung by the sense of wrong, and maddened by sympathy: it is more appalling to think of the smile answered by other gracious smiles, of the whisper echoed by other assenting whispers, which doom them first to despair and then to destruction. Popular fury finds its counterpart in courtly servility. If every outrage is to be apprehended from the one, every iniquity is deliberately sanctioned by the other, without regard to justice or decency. The word of a king, "Go thou and do likewise," makes the stoutest heart dumb: truth and virtue shrink before it.* If there are watchwords for the rabble, have not the polite and fashionable their hackneyed phrases, their fulsome unmeaning jargon as well? Both are to me anathema!

To return to the first question, as it regards individual and private manners. There is a fine illustration of the effects of preposterous and affected gentility in the character of Gertrude, in the old comedy of Eastward Ho, written by Ben Jonson, Marston, and Chapman in conjunction. This play is supposed to have given rise to Hogarth's series of prints of the *Idle and Industrious Apprentice;* and there is something exceedingly Hogarthian in the view both of vulgar and of genteel life here displayed. The character of Gertrude in particular, the heroine of the piece, is inimitably drawn. The mixture of vanity and meanness, the internal worthlessness and external pretence, the rustic ignorance and fine lady-like airs, the intoxication of novelty and infatuation of pride, appear like a dream or romance, rather than any thing in real life. Cinderella and her glass-slipper are common-place to it. She is not, like Millamant (a century afterwards,) the accomplished fine lady, but a pretender to all the foppery and finery of the character. It is the honey-moon with her ladyship, and her folly is at the full. To be a wife and the wife of a knight are to her pleasures "worn in their newest gloss," and nothing can exceed her raptures in the contemplation of both parts of the dilemma. It is not familiarity, but novelty that weds her to the court. She rises into the air of gentility from the rank soil of a city-life, and flutters about there with all the fantastic delight of a butterfly that has just changed its caterpillar state. The sound of My Lady intoxicates her with delight, makes her giddy, and almost turns her brain. On the bare strength of it she is ready to turn her father and mother out of doors, and treats her brother and sister with infinite disdain and judicial hardness of heart. With some speculators, the modern philosophy has deadened and distorted all the natural affections: and before abstract ideas and the mischievous refinements of literature were introduced, nothing was to be met with in the primeval state of society but simplicity and pastoral innocence of manners—

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* A lady of quality, in allusion to the gallantries of a reigning Prince, being told, "I suppose it will be your turn next?" said, "No: for you know it is impossible to refuse!"

"And all was conscience and tender heart."

This historical play gives the lie to the above theory pretty broadly, yet delicately. Our heroine is as vain as she is ignorant, and as unprincipled as she is both; and without an idea or wish of any kind but that of adorning her person in the glass, and being called and thought a lady, something superior to a citizen's wife.* She is so bent on finery that she believes in miracles to obtain it, and expects the fairies to bring it her. She is quite above thinking of a settlement, jointure, or pin-money. She takes the will for the deed all through the piece, and is so

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* "*Girtred.* For the passion of patience, look if Sir Petronel approach. That sweet, that fine, that delicate, that—for love's sake tell me if he come. Oh, sister Mill, though my father be a low-capt tradesman, yet I must be a lady, and I praise God my mother must call me Madam. Does he come? Off with this gown for shame's sake, off with this gown! Let not my knight take me in the city cut, in any hand! Tear't! Pox on't (does he come?) tear't off! *Thus while she sleeps, I sorrow for her sake.* (Sings.)

Mildred. Lord, sister, with what an immodest impatiency and disgraceful scorn do you put off your city-tire! I am sorry to think you imagine to right yourself in wronging that which hath made both you and us.

Gir. I tell you, I cannot endure it: I must be a lady: do you wear your quoiff with a London licket! your stamel petticoat with two guards! the buffin gown with the tuftafitty cap and the velvet lace! I must be a lady; and I will be a lady. I like some humours of the city dames well: to eat cherries only at an angel a pound; good: to dye rich scarlet black; pretty: to line a grogram gown clean through with velvet; tolerable: their pure linen, their smocks of three pound a smock, are to be borne withal: but your mincing niceries, taffity pipkins, durance petticoats, and silver bodkins—God's my life! as I shall be a lady, I cannot endure it.

Mil. Well, sister, those that scorn their nest, oft fly with a sick wing.

Gir. Bow-bell! Alas, poor Mill, when I am a lady, I'll pray for thee yet, i'faith; nay, and I'll vouchsafe to call thee sister Mill still; for though thou art not like to be a lady as I am, yet surely thou art a creature of God's making, and may'st peradventure be saved as soon as I (does he come?) *And ever and anon she doubled in her song.*

Mil. Now (lady's my comfort) what a profane ape's here!

Enter Sir PETRONEL FLASH, *Mr.* TOUCHSTONE, *and Mrs.* TOUCHSTONE.

Gir. Is my knight come? O the lord, my band! Sister, do my cheeks look well? Give me a little box o' the ear, that I may seem to blush. Now, now! so, there, there! here he is! O my dearest delight! Lord, lord! and how does my knight?

Touchstone. Fie, with more modesty.

Gir. Modesty! why, I am no citizen now. Modesty! am I not to be married? You're best to keep me modest, now I am to be a lady.

Sir Petronel. Boldness is a good fashion, and court-like.

Gir. Aye, in a country lady I hope it is, as I shall be. And how chance ye came no sooner, knight?

Sir Pet. Faith, I was so entertained in the progress with one Count Epernoun, a Welch knight: we had a match at baloon too with my Lord Whackum for four crowns.

Gir. And when shall 's be married, my knight?

Sir Pet. I am come now to consummate: and your father may call a poor knight son-in-law.

Mrs. Touchstone. Yes, that he is a knight: I know where he had money to pay the gentlemen ushers and heralds their fees. Aye, that he is a knight: and so might you have been too, if you had been aught else but an ass, as well as some of your neighbours. An' I thought you would not ha' been knighted, as I am an honest woman, I would ha' dubbed you myself. I praise God, I have wherewithal. But as for you, daughter ——

Gir. Aye, mother, I must be a lady to-morrow; and by your leave, mother (I speak it not without my duty, but only in the right of my husband), I must take place of you, mother.

Mrs. Touch. That you shall, lady-daughter; and have a coach as well as I.

Gir. Yes, mother; but my coach-horses must take the wall of your coach-horses.

Touch. Come, come, the day grows low; 'tis supper-time: and sir, respect my daughter; she has refused for you wealthy and honest matches, known good men.

Gir. Body o'truth, citizens, citizens! Sweet knight, as soon as ever we are married, take me to thy mercy, out of this miserable city. Presently: carry me out of the scent of Newcastle coal and the hearing of Bow-bell, I beseech thee; down with me, for God's sake." ACT I. SCENE I.

This dotage on sound and show seemed characteristic of that age (see *New Way to Pay Old Debts*, &c.)—as if in the grossness of sense, and the absence of all intellectual and abstract topics of thought and discourse (the thin, circulating medium of the present day), the mind was attracted without the power of resistance to the tinkling sound of its own name with a title added to it, and the image of its own person tricked out in old-fashioned finery. The effect, no doubt, was also more marked and striking from the contrast between the ordinary penury and poverty of the age and the first and more extravagant demonstrations of luxury and artificial refinement. Here is one more specimen.

" *Girtred.* Good lord, that there are no fairies now-a-days, Syn.

Syndefy. Why, Madam?

Gir. To do miracles, and bring ladies money. Sure, if we lay in a cleanly house, they would haunt it, Synne? I'll try. I'll sweep the chamber soon at night, and set a dish of water o' the hearth. A fairy may come and bring a pearl or a diamond. We do not know, Synne: or there may be a pot of gold hid in the yard, if we had tools to dig for 't. Why may not we two rise early i' the morning, Synne, afore any body is up, and find a jewel i' the streets worth a hundred pounds? May not some great court-lady, as she comes from revels at midnight, look out of her coach, as 'tis running, and lose such a jewel, and we find it? ha!

Syn. They are pretty waking dreams, these.

Gir. Or may not some old usurer be drunk over-night with a bag of money, besotted with this ignorant, vulgar notion of rank and title as a real thing that cannot be counterfeited, that she is the dupe of her own fine stratagems, and marries a gull, a dolt, a broken adventurer, for an accomplished and brave gentleman. Her meanness is equal to her folly or her pride (and nothing can be greater,) yet she holds out on the strength of her original pretensions for a long time, and plays the upstart with decent and imposing consistency. Indeed, her infatuation and caprices are akin to the flighty perversity of a disordered imagination; and another turn of the wheel of good or evil fortune would have sent her to keep company with Hogarth's *Merveilleuses* in Bedlam, or with Deckar's group of Coquettes in the same place.—The other parts of the play are a dreary lee-shore, like Cuckold's Point on the coast of Essex, where the preconcerted shipwreck takes place that winds up the catastrophe of the piece. But this is also characteristic of the age, and serves as a contrast to the airy and factitious character which is the principal figure in the plot. We had made but little progress from that point till Hogarth's time, if Hogarth is to be believed in his description of city manners. How wonderfully we have distanced it since!

Without going into this at length, there is one circumstance I would mention in which I think there has been a striking improvement in the family economy of modern times—and that is, in the relation of mistresses and servants. After visits and finery, a married woman of the old school had nothing to do but to attend to her housewifery. She had no other resource, no other sense of power, but to harangue and lord it over her domestics. Modern book-education supplies the place of the old-fashioned system of kitchen persecution and eloquence. A well-bred woman now seldom goes into the kitchen to look after the servants: —formerly what was called a good manager, an exemplary mistress of a family, did nothing but hunt them from morning to

and leave it behind him on a stall? For God's sake, Syn, let 's rise to-morrow by break of day, and see. I protest, la! if I had as much money as an alderman, I would scatter some on't i' the streets, for poor ladies to find when their knights were laid up. And now I remember my song of the Golden Shower, why may not I have such a fortune? I'll sing it, and try what luck I shall have after it." ACT V SCENE I.

night, from one year's end to another, without leaving them a moment's rest, peace, or comfort. Now a servant is left to do her work without this suspicious and tormenting interference and fault-finding at every step, and she does it all the better. The proverbs about the mistress's eye, &c. are no longer held for current. A woman from this habit, which at last became an unconquerable passion, would scold her maids for fifty years together, and nothing could stop her: now the temptation to read the last new poem or novel, and the necessity of talking of it in the next company she goes into, prevent her—and the benefit to all parties is incalculable!

ESSAY XXI.

On Antiquity.

There is no such thing as Antiquity in the ordinary acceptation we affix to the term. Whatever is or has been, while it is passing, must be modern. The early ages may have been barbarous in themselves; but they have become *ancient* with the slow and silent lapse of successive generations. The "olden times" are only such in reference to us. The past is rendered strange, mysterious, visionary, awful, from the great gap in time that parts us from it, and the long perspective of waning years. Things gone by and almost forgotten, look dim and dull, uncouth and quaint, from our ignorance of them, and the mutability of customs. But in their day they were fresh, unimpaired, in full vigour, familiar, and glossy. The Children in the Wood, and Percy's Relics, were once recent productions; and Auld Robin Gray was, in his time, a very common-place old fellow! The wars of York and Lancaster, while they lasted, were "lively, audible, and full of vent," as fresh and lusty as the white and red roses that distinguished their different banners, though they have since become a by-word and a solecism in history.

The sun shone in Julius Cæsar's time just as it does now. On the road-side between Winchester and Salisbury are some remains of old Roman encampments, with their double lines of circumvallation (now turned into pasture for sheep,) which answer exactly to the descriptions of this kind in Cæsar's Commentaries. In a dull and cloudy atmosphere, I can conceive that this is the identical spot that the first Cæsar trod; and figure to myself the deliberate movements and scarce perceptible march of close-embodied legions. But if the sun breaks out, making its way through dazzling, fleecy clouds, lights up the blue serene, and gilds the sombre earth, I can no longer persuade myself that it is the same scene as formerly, or transfer the actual image before me so far back. The brightness of nature is not easily reduced to the low, twilight tone of history; and the impressions of sense defeat and dissipate the faint traces of learning and tradition. It is only by an effort of reason, to which fancy is averse, that I bring myself to believe that the sun shone as bright, that the sky was as blue, and the earth as green, two thousand years ago as it is at present. How ridiculous this seems; yet so it is!

The *dark* or middle ages, when every thing was hid in the fog and haze of confusion and ignorance, seem, to the same involuntary kind of prejudice, older and farther off, and more inaccessible to the imagination, than the brilliant and well-defined periods of Greece and Rome. A Gothic ruin appears buried in a greater depth of obscurity, to be weighed down and rendered venerable with the hoar of more distant ages, to have been longer mouldering into neglect and oblivion, to be a record and memento of events more wild and alien to our own times, than a Grecian temple.* Amadis de Gaul, and the Seven Champions of Christendom, with me (honestly speaking) rank as contemporaries with Theseus, Pirithous, and the heroes of the fabulous ages. My imagination will stretch no farther back into the commencement of time than the first traces and rude dawn of civilization and mighty enterprize in either case; and in attempting to force it upwards by the scale of chronology, it only recoils upon itself, and dwindles from a lofty survey of "the dark rearward and abyss of time," into a poor and puny calculation of insignificant cyphers. In like manner, I cannot go back to any time more remote and dreary than that recorded in Stow's and Hollingshed's Chronicles, unless I turn to "the wars of old Assaracus and Inachus divine," and the gorgeous events of Eastern history, where the distance of place may be said to add to the length of time and weight of thought. That is old (in sentiment and poetry) which is decayed, shadowy, imperfect, out of date, and changed from what it was. That of which we have a distinct idea, which comes before us entire and made out in all its parts, will have a novel appearance, however old in reality; nor can it be impressed with the romantic and superstitious character of antiquity. Those times that we can parallel with our own in civilization and knowledge, seem advanced into the same line with our own in the order of progression. The perfection of art does not look like the infancy of things. Or those times are prominent, and, as it were, confront the present age, that are raised high in the scale of polished society, and the trophies of which stand out above the low, obscure, grovelling level of barbarism and rusticity. Thus, Rome and Athens were two cities set on a hill, that could not be hid, and that everywhere meet the retrospective eye of history. It is not the full-grown, articulated, thoroughly accomplished periods of the world, that we regard with the pity or reverence due to age; so much as those imperfect, unformed, uncertain periods, which seem to totter on the verge of non-existence, to shrink from the grasp of our feeble imaginations, as they crawl out of, or retire into the womb of time, and of which our utmost assurance is to doubt whether they ever were or not!

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* "The Gothic architecture, though not so ancient as the Grecian, is more so to our imagination, with which the artist is more concerned than with absolute truth."—*Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses*, vol. ii., p 138.

Till I met with this remark in so circumspect and guarded a writer as Sir Joshua, I was afraid of being charged with extravagance in some of the above assertions. *Pereant isti qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.* It is thus that our favourite speculations are often accounted paradoxes by the ignorant, while by the learned reader they are set down as plagiarisms.

To give some other instances of this feeling, taken at random. Whittington and his Cat, the first and favourite studies of my childhood, are, to my way of thinking, as old and reverend personages as any recorded in more authentic history. It must have been long before the invention of triple bob-majors, that Bow-bells rang out their welcome never-to-be-forgotten peal, hailing him Thrice Lord Mayor of London. Does not all we know relating to the site of old London-wall and the first stones that were laid of this mighty metropolis seem of a far older date (hid in the lap of "chaos and old night") than the splendid and imposing details of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire ?—Again, the early Italian pictures of Cimabue, Giotto, and Ghirlandaio are covered with the marks of unquestionable antiquity; while the Greek statues, done a thousand years before them, shine in glossy, undiminished splendour, and flourish in immortal youth and beauty. The latter Grecian Gods, as we find them there represented, are to all appearance a race of modern fine gentlemen who *led the* *life of honour* with their favourite mistresses of mortal or immortal mould—were gallant, graceful, well-dressed, and well-spoken; whereas the Gothic deities, long after carved in horrid wood or misshapen stone, and worshipped in dreary waste or tangled forest, belong, in the mind's heraldry, to almost as ancient a date as those elder and discarded Gods of the Pagan mythology, Ops, and Rhea and old Saturn—those strange anomalies of earth and cloudy spirit, born of the elements and conscious will, and clothing themselves and all things with shape and formal being. The Chronicle of Brute, in Spenser's Fairy Queen, has a tolerable air of antiquity in it; so in the dramatic line, the Ghost of one of the old kings of Ormus, introduced as Prologue to Fulke Greville's play of Mustapha, is reasonably far-fetched, and palpably obscure. A monk in the Popish Calendar, or even in the Canterbury Tales, is a more questionable and out-of-the-way personage than the Chiron of Achilles, or the high-priest in Homer. When Chaucer, in his Troilus and Cressida, makes the Trojan hero invoke the absence of light, in these two lines—

> "Why proffer'st thou light me for to sell?
> Go sell it them that smalle selès grave!"

he is guilty of an anachronism; or at least I much doubt whether there was such a profession as that of seal-engraver in the Trojan war. But the dimness of the objects and the quaintness of the allusion throw us farther back into the night of time, than the golden glittering images of the Iliad. The Travels of Anacharsis are less obsolete at this time of day than Coryate's Crudities or Fuller's Worthies. "Here is some of the ancient city," said a Roman, taking up a handful of dust from beneath his feet. The ground we tread on is as old as the creation, though it does not seem so, except when collected into gigantic masses, or separated by gloomy solitudes from modern uses and the purposes of common life. The lone Helvellyn and the silent Andes are in thought coëval with the globe itself, and can only perish with it. The pyramids of Egypt are vast, sublime, old, eternal; but Stonehenge, built no doubt in a later day, satisfies my capacity for the sense of antiquity; it seems as if as much rain had drizzled on its grey, withered head, and it had watched out as many winter-nights; the hand of time is upon it, and it has sustained the burden of years upon its back, a wonder and a ponderous riddle, time out of mind, without known origin or use, baffling fable or conjecture, the credulity of the ignorant, or wise men's search.

"Thou noblest monument of Albion's isle,
Whether by Merlin's aid, from Scythia's shore
To Amber's fatal plain Pendragon bore,
Huge frame of giant hands, the mighty pile,
T'entomb his Britons slain by Hengist's guile:
Or Druid priests, sprinkled with human gore,
Taught 'mid thy massy maze their mystic lore:
Or Danish chiefs, enrich'd with savage spoil,
To victory's idol vast, an unhewn shrine,
Rear'd the rude heap, or in thy hallow'd round
Repose the kings of Brutus' genuine line;
Or here those kings in solemn state were crown'd;
Studious to trace thy wondrous origin,
We muse on many an ancient tale renown'd."

WARTON.

So it is with respect to ourselves also. It is the sense of change or decay that marks the difference between the real and apparent progress of time, both in the events of our own lives and the history of the world we live in.

Impressions of a peculiar and accidental nature, of which few traces are left, and which return seldom or never, fade in the distance, and are consigned to obscurity; while those that belong to a given and definite class are kept up, and assume a constant and tangible form from familiarity and habit. That which was personal to myself merely, is lost and confounded with other things, like a drop in the ocean; it was but a point at first, which by its nearness affected me, and by its removal becomes nothing; while circumstances of a general interest and abstract importance present the same distinct, well-known aspect as ever, and are durable in proportion to the extent of their influence. Our own idle feelings and foolish fancies we get tired or grow ashamed of, as their novelty wears out; "when we become men, we put away childish things;" but the impressions we derive from the exercise of our higher faculties last as long as the faculties themselves. They have nothing to do with time, place, and circumstance; and are of universal applicability and recurrence. An incident in my own history, that delighted or tormented me very much at the time, I may have long since blotted from my memory, or have great difficulty in calling to mind after a certain period; but I can never forget the first time of my seeing Mrs. Siddons act, which appears as if it happened yesterday; and the reason is because it has been something for me to think of ever since. The petty and the personal, that which appeals to our senses and our appetites, passes away with the occasion that gives it birth. The grand and the ideal, that which appeals to the imagination, can only perish with it, and remains with us, unimpaired in its lofty abstraction, from youth to age, as, wherever we go, we still see the same heavenly bodies shining over our heads! An old familiar face, the house that we were brought up in, sometimes the scenes and places that we formerly knew and loved, may be changed, so that we hardly know them again; the characters in books, the faces in old pictures, the propositions in Euclid, remain the same as when they were first pointed out to us. There is a continual alternation of generation and decay in individual forms and feelings, that marks the progress of existence, and the ceaseless current of our lives, borne along with it; but this does not extend to our love of art or knowledge of nature. It seems a long time ago since some of the first events of the French Revolution; the prominent characters that figured then have been swept away and succeeded by others; yet I cannot say that this circumstance has in any way abated my hatred of tyranny, or reconciled my understanding to the fashionable doctrine of Divine Right. The sight of an old newspaper of that date would give one a fit of the spleen for half an hour; on the other hand, it must be confessed, Mr. Burke's Reflections on this subject are as fresh and dazzling as in the year 1791; and his Letter to a Noble Lord is even now as interesting as Lord John Russell's Letter to Mr. Wilberforce, which appeared only a few weeks back. Ephemeral politics and still-born productions are speedily consigned to oblivion; great principles and original works are a match even for time itself!

We may, by following up this train of ideas, give some account why time runs faster as our years increase. We gain by habit and experience a more determinate and settled, that is, a more uniform notion of things. We refer each particular to a given standard. Our impressions acquire the character of identical propositions. Our most striking thoughts are turned into truisms. One observation is like another, that I made formerly. The idea I have of a certain character or subject is just the same as I had ten years ago. I have learnt nothing since. There is no alteration perceptible, no advance made; so that the two points of time seem to touch and coincide. I get from the one to the other immediately by the familiarity of habit, by the undistinguishing process of abstraction. What I can recall so easily and mechanically does not seem far off; it is completely within my reach, and consequently close to me in apprehension. I have no intricate web of curious speculation to wind or unwind, to pass from one state of feeling and opinion to the other; no complicated train of associations, which place an immeasurable barrier between my knowledge or my ignorance at different epochs. There is no contrast, no repugnance to widen the interval; no new sentiment infused, like another atmosphere, to lengthen the perspective. I am but where I was. I see the object before me just as I have been accustomed to do. The ideas are written down in the brain as in the page of a book—*totidem verbis et literis*. The mind becomes *stereotyped*. By not going forward to explore new regions, or break up new grounds, we are thrown back more and more upon our past acquisitions; and this habitual recurrence increases the facility and indifference with which we make the imaginary transition. By thinking of what has been, we change places with ourselves, and transpose our personal identity at will; so as to fix the slider of our improgressive continuance at whatever point we please. This is an advantage or a disadvantage, which we have not in youth. After a certain period, we neither lose nor gain, neither add to nor diminish our stock; up to that period we do nothing else but lose our former notions and being, and gain a new one every instant. Our life is then like the birth of a new day; the dawn breaks apace, and the clouds clear away. A new world of thought and observation is opened to our search. A year makes the difference of an age. A total alteration takes place in our ideas, feelings, habits, looks. We outgrow ourselves. A separate set of objects, of the existence of which we had not a suspicion, engages and occupies our whole souls. Shapes and colours of all varieties, and of gorgeous tint, intercept our view of what we were. Life thickens. Time glows on its axle. Every revolution of the wheel gives an unsettled aspect to things. The world and its inhabitants turn round, and we forget one change of scene in another. Art woos us; science tempts us into her intricate labyrinths; each step presents unlooked-for vistas, and closes upon us our backward path. Our onward road is strange, obscure, and infinite. We are bewildered in a shadow, lost in a dream. Our perceptions have the brightness and the indistinctness of a trance. Our continuity of consciousness is broken, crumbles, and falls in pieces. We go on, learning and forgetting every hour. Our feelings are chaotic, confused, strange to each other and to ourselves. Our life does not hang together, but straggling, disjointed, winds its slow length along, stretching out to the endless future—unmindful of the ignorant past. We seem many beings in one, and cast the slough of our existence daily. The birth of knowledge is the generation of time. The unfolding of our experience is long and voluminous; nor do we all at once recover from our surprise at the number of objects that distract our attention. Every new study is a separate, arduous, and insurmountable undertaking. We are lost in wonder at the magnitude, the difficulty, and the interminable prospect. We spell out the first years of our existence, like learning a lesson for the first time, where every advance is slow, doubtful, interesting: afterwards we rehearse our parts by rote, and are hardly conscious of the meaning. A very short period (from fifteen to twenty-five or thirty) includes the whole map and table of contents of human life. From that time we may be said to live our lives over again, to repeat ourselves—the same thoughts return at stated intervals, like the tunes of a barrel-organ; and the volume of the universe is no more than a form of words and book of reference.

Time in general is supposed to move faster or slower, as we attend more or less, to the succession of our ideas, in the same manner as distance is increased or lessened by the greater or less variety of intervening objects. There is, however, a difference in this respect. Suspense, where the mind is engrossed with one idea, and kept from amusing itself with any other, is not only the most uncomfortable, but the most tiresome of all things. The fixing our attention on a single point makes us more sensible of the delay, and hangs an additional weight of fretful impatience on every moment of expectation. People in country-places, without employment or artificial resources, complain that time lies heavy on their hands. Its leaden pace is not occasioned by the quantity of thought, but by vacancy, and the continual, languid craving after excitement. It wants spirit and vivacity to give it motion. We are on the watch to see how time goes; and it appears to lag behind, because, in the absence of objects to arrest our immediate attention, we are always getting on before it. We do not see its divisions, but we feel the galling pressure of each creeping sand that measures out our hours. Again, a rapid succession of external objects and amusements, which leave no room for reflection, and where one gratification is forgotten in the next, makes time pass quickly, as well as delightfully. We do not perceive an extent of surface, but only a succession of points. We are whirled swiftly along by the hand of dissipation, but cannot stay to look behind us. On the contrary, change of scene, travelling through a foreign country, or the meeting with a variety of striking adventures that lay hold of the imagination, and continue to haunt it in a waking dream, will make days seem weeks. From the crowd of events, the number of distinct points of view, brought into a small compass, we seem to have passed through a great length of time, when it is no such thing. In traversing a flat, barren country, the monotony of our ideas fatigues, and makes the way longer; whereas, if the prospect is diversified and picturesque, we get over the miles without counting them. In painting or writing, hours are melted almost into minutes: the mind, absorbed in the eagerness of its pursuit, forgets the time necessary to accomplish it; and, indeed, the clock often finds us employed on the same thought or part of a picture that occupied us when it struck last. It seems then there are several other circumstances, besides the number and distinctness of our ideas, to be taken into the account in the measure of time, or in considering "whom time ambles withal, whom time gallops withal, and whom he stands still withal."* Time wears away slowly with a man in solitary confinement; not from the number or variety of his ideas, but from their weary sameness, fretting like drops of water. The imagination may distinguish the lapse of time by the brilliant variety of its tints, and the many striking shapes it assumes; the heart feels it by the weight of sadness, and "grim-visaged, comfortless despair!"

I will conclude this subject with remarking, that the fancied shortness of life is aided by the apprehension of a future state. The constantly directing our hopes and fears to a higher state of being beyond the present, necessarily brings death habitually before us, and defines the narrow limits within which we hold our frail existence, as mountains bound the horizon, and unavoidably draw our attention to it. This may be one reason among others why the fear of death was a less prominent feature in ancient times than it is at present: because the thoughts of it, and of a future state, were less frequently impressed on the mind by religion and morality. The greater progress of civilization and security in modern times has also considerably to do with our practical effeminacy: for though the old Pagans were not bound to think of death as a religious duty, they never could foresee when they should be compelled to submit to it, as a natural necessity, or accident of war, &c. They viewed death, therefore, with an eye of speculative indifference and practical resolution. That the idea of annihilation did not impress them with the same horror and repugnance as it does the modern believer, or even infidel, is easily accounted for (though a writer in the Edinburgh Review thinks the question insoluble*) from this plain reason, viz. that not being taught from childhood a belief in a future state of existence as a part of the creed of their country, the having this belief called into question or struck from under their feet did not cause the same uneasiness or confusion of mind in them as it does in us. He who has never been led to expect the reversion of an estate, does not severely feel the loss of it: for it is the indulgence of hope that embitters disappointment.

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* "*Rosalind.* Time travels in divers paces with divers persons: I'll tell you who time ambles withal, who time trots withal, who time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal.

Orlando. I prythee, who doth he trot withal?

Ros. Marry, he trots hard with a young maid between the contract of her marriage and the day it is solemnized: if the interim be but a se'nnight, time's pace is so hard that it seems the length of seven years.

Orl. Who ambles time withal?

Ros. With a priest that lacks Latin, and a rich man that hath not the gout; for the one sleeps easily, because he cannot study; and the other lives merrily because he feels no pain; the one lacking the burden of lean and wasteful learning; the other knowing no burden of heavy tedious penury. These time ambles with.

Orl. Who doth he gallop withal?

Ros. With a thief to the gallows; for though he go as softly as foot can fall, he thinks himself too soon there.

Orl. Who stays it withal?

Ros. With lawyers in the vacation; for they sleep between term and term, and then they perceive not how time moves."—*As You Like It*, ACT III., SCENE II.

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* "On the other point, namely, the dark and sceptical spirit prevalent through the works of this poet (Lord Byron) we shall not now utter all that we feel, but rather direct the notice of our readers to it as a singular phenomenon in the poetry of the age. Whoever has studied the spirit of Greek and Roman literature, must have been struck with the comparative disregard and indifference, wherewith the thinking men of these exquisitely polished nations contemplated those subjects of darkness and mystery which afford at some period or other of his life so much disquiet—we had almost said so much agony, to the mind of every reflecting modern. It is difficult to account for this in any very satisfactory, and we suspect altogether impossible to do so in any strictly logical, manner. In reading the works of Plato and his interpreter Cicero, we find the germs of all the doubts and anxieties to which we have alluded, so far as these are connected with the workings of our reason. The singularity is, that those clouds of darkness, which hang over the intellect, do not appear, so far as we can perceive, to have thrown at any time any very alarming shade upon the feelings or temper of the ancient sceptic. We should think a very great deal of this was owing to the brilliancy and activity of his southern fancy. The lighter spirits of antiquity, like the more mercurial of our moderns, sought refuge in mere *gaieté du cœur* and derision. The graver poets and philosophers—and poetry and philosophy were in those days seldom disunited—built up some airy and beautiful system of mysticism, each following his own devices, and suiting the erection to his own peculiarities of hope and inclination; and this being once accomplished, the mind appears to have felt quite satisfied with what it had done, and to have reposed amidst the splendours of its sand-built fantastic edifice, with as much security as if it had been grooved and rivetted into the rock of ages. The mere exercise of ingenuity in devising a system furnished consolation to its creators, or improvers. Lucretius is a striking example of all this; and it may be averred that down to the time of Claudian, who lived in the fourth century of our æra, in no classical writer of antiquity do there occur any traces of what moderns understand by the restlessness and discomfort of uncertainty, as to the government of the world and the future destinies of man."—*Edinburgh Review*, vol. xxx., p. 96, 97; *Article*, *Childe Harold*, Canto 4.

ESSAY XXII.

On the Conduct of Life; or, Advice to a Schoolboy.

My dear little fellow:

You are now going to settle at school, and may consider this as your first entrance into the world. As my health is so indifferent, and I may not be with you long, I wish to leave you some advice (the best I can) for your conduct in life, both that it may be of use to you, and as something to remember me by. I may at least be able to caution you against my own errors, if nothing else.

As we went along to your new place of destination, you often repeated that "you durst say they were a set of stupid, disagreeable people," meaning the people at the school. You were to blame in this. It is a good old rule to hope for the best. Always, my dear, believe things to be right, till you find them the contrary; and even then, instead of irritating yourself against them, endeavour to put up with them as well as you can, if you cannot alter them. You said, "You were sure you would not like the school where you were going." This was wrong. What you meant was that you did not like to leave home. But you could not tell whether you should like the school or not, till you had given it a trial. Otherwise, your saying that you should not like it was determining that you would not like it. Never anticipate evils; or, because you cannot have things exactly as you wish, make them out worse than they are, through mere spite and wilfulness.

You seemed at first to take no notice of your school-fellows, or rather to set yourself against them, because they were strangers to you. They knew as little of you as you did of them; so that this would have been a reason for their keeping aloof from you as well, which you would have felt as a hardship.

Learn never to conceive a prejudice against others, because you know nothing of them. It is bad reasoning, and makes enemies of half the world. Do not think ill of them, till they behave ill to you; and then strive to avoid the faults which you see in them. This will disarm their hostility sooner than pique or resentment or complaint.

I thought you were disposed to criticize the dress of some of the boys as not so good as your own. Never despise any one for any thing that he cannot help—least of all, for his poverty. I would wish you to keep up appearances yourself as a defence against the idle sneers of the world, but I would not have you value yourself upon them. I hope you will neither be the dupe nor victim of vulgar prejudices. Instead of saying above—"Never despise any one for any thing that he cannot help"—I might have said, "Never despise any one at all;" for contempt implies a triumph over and pleasure in the ill of another. It means that you are glad and congratulate yourself on their failings or misfortunes. The sense of inferiority in others, without this indirect appeal to our self-love, is a painful feeling, and not an exulting one.

You complain since, that the boys laugh at you and do not care about you, and that you are not treated as you were at home. My dear, that is one chief reason for your being sent to school, to inure you betimes to the unavoidable rubs aad uncertain reception you may meet with in life. You cannot always be with me, and perhaps it is as well that you cannot. But you must not expect others to show the same concern about you as I should. You have hitherto been a spoiled child, and have been used to have your own way a good deal, both in the house and among your playfellows, with whom you were too fond of being a leader: but you have good nature and good sense, and will get the better of this in time. You have now got among other boys who are your equals, or bigger and stronger than yourself, and who have something else to attend to besides humouring your whims and fancies, and you feel this as a repulse or piece of injustice. But the first lesson to learn is that there are other people in the world besides yourself. There are a number of boys in the school where you are, whose amusements and pur suits (whatever they may be) are and ought to be of as much consequence to them as yours can be to you, and to which therefore you must give way in your turn. The more airs of childish self-importance you give yourself, you will only expose yourself to be the more thwarted and laughed at. True equality is the only true morality or true wisdom. Remember always that you are but one among others, and you can hardly mistake your place in society. In your father's house, you might do as you pleased; in the world, you will find competitors at every turn. You are not born a king's son, to destroy or dictate to millions: you can only expect to share their fate, or settle your differences amicably with them. You already find it so at school; and I wish you to be reconciled to your situation as soon, and with as little pain as you can.

It was my misfortune (perhaps) to be bred up among Dissenters, who look with too jaundiced an eye at others, and set too high a value on their own peculiar pretensions. From being proscribed themselves, they learn to proscribe others; and come in the end to reduce all integrity of principle and soundness of opinion within the pale of their own little communion. Those who were out of it, and did not belong to the class of *Rational Dissenters*, I was led erroneously to look upon as hardly deserving the name of rational beings. Being thus satisfied as to the select few who are "the salt of the earth," it is easy to persuade ourselves that we are at the head of them, and to fancy ourselves of more importance in the scale of true desert than all the rest of the world put together, who do not interpret a certain text of Scripture in the manner that we have been taught to do. You will (from the difference of education) be free from this bigotry and will, I hope, avoid every thing akin to the same exclusive and narrow-minded spirit. Think that the minds of men are various as their faces—that the modes and employments of life are numberless as they are necessary—that there is more than one class of merit—that though others may be wrong in some things, they are not so in all—and that countless races of men have been born, have lived and died, without ever hearing of any one of those points in which you take a just pride and pleasure —and you will not err on the side of that spiritual pride or intellectual coxcombry which has been so often the bane of the studious and learned!

I observe you have got a way of speaking of your schoolfellows as "*that* Hoare, *that* Harris," and so on, as if you meant to mark them out for particular reprobation, or did not think them good enough for you. It is a bad habit to speak disrespectfully of others; for it will lead you to think and feel uncharitably towards them. Ill names beget ill blood. Even where there may be some repeated trifling provocation, it is better to be courteous, mild, and forbearing, than captious, impatient, and fretful. The faults of others too often arise out of our own ill temper; or though they should be real, we shall not mend them, by exasperating ourselves against them. Treat your playmates, as Hamlet advises Polonius to treat the players, "according to your own dignity, rather than their deserts." If you fly out at every thing in them that you disapprove or think done on purpose to annoy you, you lie constantly at the mercy of their caprice, rudeness, or ill-nature. You should be more your own master.

Do not begin to quarrel with the world too soon: for, bad as it may be, it is the best we have to live in—here. If railing would have made it better, it would have been reformed long ago: but as this is not to be hoped for at present, the best way is to slide through it as contentedly and innocently as we may. The worst fault it has, is want of charity: and calling *knave* and *fool* at every turn will not cure this failing. Consider (as a matter of vanity) that if there were not so many knaves and fools as we find, the wise and honest would not be those rare and shining characters that they are allowed to be; and (as a matter of philosophy) that if the world be really incorrigible in this respect, it is a reflection to make one sad, not angry. We may laugh or weep at the madness of mankind: we have no right to vilify them, for our own sakes or theirs. Misanthropy is not the disgust of the mind at human nature, but with itself; or it is laying its own exaggerated vices and foul blots at the door of others! Do not, however, mistake what I have here said. I would not have you, when you grow up, adopt the low and sordid fashion of palliating existing abuses or of putting the best face upon the worst things. I only mean that indiscriminate, unqualified satire can do little good, and that those who indulge in the most revolting speculations on human nature, do not themselves always set the fairest examples, or strive to prevent its lower degradation. They seem rather willing to reduce it to their theoretical standard. For the rest, the very outcry that is made (if sincere) shows that things cannot be quite so bad as they are represented. The abstract hatred and scorn of vice implies the capacity for virtue: the impatience expressed at the most striking instances of deformity proves the innate idea and love of beauty in the human mind. The best antidote I can recommend to you hereafter against the disheartening effect of such writings as those of Rochefoucault, Mandeville, and others, will be to look at the pictures of Raphael and Correggio. You need not be altogether ashamed, my dear little boy, of belonging to a species which could produce such faces as those; nor despair of doing something worthy of a laudable ambition, when you see what such hands have wrought! You will, perhaps, one day have reason to thank me for this advice.

As to your studies and school exercises, I wish you to learn Latin, French, and dancing. I would insist upon the last more particularly, both because it is more likely to be neglected, and because it is of the greatest consequence to your success in life. Every thing almost depends upon first impressions; and these depend (besides *person*, which is not in our power,) upon two things, *dress* and *address*, which every one may command with proper attention. These are the small coin in the intercourse of life, which are continually in request; and perhaps you will find at the year's end, or towards the close of life, that the daily insults, coldness, or contempt to which you have been exposed by a neglect of such superficial recommendations, are hardly atoned for by the few proofs of esteem or admiration which your integrity or talents have been able to extort in the course of it. When we habitually disregard those things which we know will ensure the favourable opinion of others, it shows we set that opinion at defiance, or consider ourselves above it, which no one ever did with impunity. An inattention to our own persons implies a disrespect to others, and may often be traced no less to a want of good nature than of good sense. The old maxim—*Desire t* *please, and you will infallibly please*—explains the whole matter, If there is a tendency to vanity and affectation on this side of the question, there is an equal alloy of pride and obstinacy on the opposite one.—Slovenliness may at any time be cured by an effort of resolution, but a graceful carriage requires an early habit, and, in most cases, the aid of the dancing-master. I would not have you, from not knowing how to enter a room properly, stumble at the very threshhold in the good graces of those on whom it is possible the fate of your future life may depend. Nothing creates a greater prejudice against any one than awkwardness. A person who is confused in manner and gesture seems to have done something wrong, or as if he was conscious of no one qualification to build a confidence in himself upon. On the other hand, openness, freedom, self-possession, set others at ease with you by showing that you are on good terms with yourself. Grace in women gains the affections sooner, and secures them longer, than any thing else—it is an outward and visible sign of an inward harmony of soul—as the want of it in men, as if the mind and body equally hitched in difficulties and were distracted with doubts, is the greatest impediment in the career of gallantry and road to the female heart. Another thing I would caution you against is not to pore over your books till you are bent almost double—a habit you will never be able to get the better of, and which you will find of serious ill consequence. *A stoop in the shoulders* sinks a man in public and in private estimation. You are at present straight enough, and you walk with boldness and spirit. Do nothing to take away the use of your limbs, or the spring and elasticity of your muscles. As to all worldly advantages, it is to the full of as much importance that your deportment should be erect and manly as your actions.

You will naturally find out all this and fall into it, if your attention is drawn out sufficiently to what is passing around you; and this will be the case, unless you are absorbed too much in books and those sedentary studies,

> "Which waste the marrow, and consume the brain."

You are, I think, too fond of reading, as it is. As one means of avoiding excess in this way, I would wish you to make it a rule, never to read at meal-times, nor in company when there is any (even the most trivial) conversation going on, nor ever to let your eagerness to learn encroach upon your play-hours. Books are but one inlet of knowledge; and the pores of the mind, like those of the body, should be left open to all impressions. I applied too close to my studies soon after I was of your age, and hurt myself irreparably by it. Whatever may be the value of learning, health and good spirits are of more.

I would have you, as I said, make yourself master of French, because you may find it of use in the commerce of life; and I would have you learn Latin, partly because I learnt it myself, and I would not have you without any of the advantages or sources of knowledge that I possessed—it would be a bar of separation between us—and secondly, because there is an atmosphere round this sort of classical ground, to which that of actual life is gross and vulgar. Shut out from this garden of early sweetness, we may well exclaim—

> "How shall we part and wander down
> Into a lower world, to this obscure
> And wild. How shall we breathe in other air
> Less pure, accustom'd to immortal fruits?"

I do not think the Classics so indispensable to the cultivation of your intellect as on another account, which I have explained elsewhere, and you will have no objection to turn with me to the passage.

"The study of the Classics is less to be regarded as an exercise of the intellect, than as *a discipline of humanity*. The peculiar advantage of this mode of education consists not so much in strengthening the understanding, as in softening and refining the taste. It gives men liberal views; it accustoms the mind to take an interest in things foreign to itself; to love virtue for its own sake; to prefer fame to life, and glory to riches; and to fix our thoughts on the remote and permanent, instead of narrow and fleeting objects. It teaches us to believe that there is something really great and excellent in the world, surviving all the shocks of accident and fluctuations of opinion, and raises us above that low and servile fear, which bows only to present power and upstart authority. Rome and Athens filled a place in the history of mankind, which can never be occupied again. They were two cities set on a hill, which could not be hid; all eyes have seen them, and their light shines like a mighty sea-mark into the abyss of time.

> "Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
> Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;
> Secure from flames, from envy's fiercer rage,
> Destructive war, and all-involving age.
> Hail, bards triumphant, born in happier days,
> Immortal heirs of universal praise!
> Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
> As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!"

It is this feeling more than any thing else which produces a marked difference between the study of the ancient and modern languages, and which, by the weight and importance of the consequences attached to the former, stamps every word with a monumental firmness. By conversing with the *mighty dead*, we imbibe sentiment with knowledge. We become strongly attached to those who can no longer either hurt or serve us, except through the influence which they exert over the mind. We feel the presence of that power which gives immortality to human thoughts and actions, and catch the flame of enthusiasm from all nations and ages."

Because, however, you have learnt Latin and Greek, and can speak a different language, do not fancy yourself of a different order of beings from those you ordinarily converse with. They perhaps know and can do more *things* than you, though you have learnt a greater variety of *names* to express the same thing by. The great object indeed of these studies is to be "a cure for a narrow and selfish spirit," and to carry the mind out of its petty and local prejudices to the idea of a more general humanity. Do not fancy, because you are intimate with Homer and Virgil, that your neighbours who can never attain the same posthumous fame are to be despised, like those impudent valets who live in noble families and look down upon every one else. Though you are master of Cicero's *Orations*, think it possible for a cobler at a stall to be more eloquent than you. "But you are a scholar, and he is not." Well, then, you have that advantage over him, but it does not follow that you are to have every other. Look at the heads of the celebrated poets and philosophers of antiquity in the collection at Wilton, and you will say they answer to their works: but you will find others in the same collection whose names have hardly come down to us, that are equally fine, and cast in the same classic mould. Do you imagine that all the thoughts, genius, and capacity of those old and mighty nations are contained in a few odd volumes, to be thumbed by school-boys? This reflection is not meant to lessen your admiration of the great names to which you will be accustomed to look up, but to direct it to that solid mass of intellect and power, of which they were the most shining ornaments. I would wish you to excel in this sort of learning and to take a pleasure in it, because it is the path that has been chosen for you: but do not suppose that others do not excel equally in their line of study or exercise of skill, or that there is but one mode of excellence in art or nature. You have got on vastly beyond the point at which you set out; but others have been getting on as well as you in the same or other ways, and have kept pace with you. What, then, you may ask, is the use of all the pains you have taken, if it gives you no superiority over mankind in general? It is this—You have reaped all the benefit of improvement and knowledge yourself; and farther, if you had not moved forwards, you would by this time have been left behind. Envy no one, disparage no one, think yourself above no one. Their demerits will not piece out your deficiencies; nor is it a waste of time and labour for you to cultivate your own talents, because you cannot bespeak a monopoly of all advantages. You are more learned than many of your acquaintance who may be more active, healthy, witty, successful in business, or expert in some elegant or useful art than you; but you have no reason to complain, if you have attained the object of your ambition. Or if you should not be able to compass this from a want of genius or parts, yet learn, my child, to be contented with a mediocrity of acquirements. You may still be respectable in your conduct, and enjoy a tranquil obscurity, with more friends and fewer enemies than you might otherwise have had.

There is one almost certain drawback on a course of scholastic study, that it unfits men for active life. The *ideal* is always at variance with the *practical*. The habit of fixing the attention on the imaginary and abstracted deprives the mind equally of energy and fortitude. By indulging our imaginations on fictions and chimeras, where we have it all our own way, and are led on only by the pleasure of the prospect, we grow fastidious, effeminate, lapped in idle luxury, impatient of contradiction, and unable to sustain the shock of real adversity, when it comes; as by being taken up with abstract reasoning or remote events in which we are merely passive spectators, we have no resources to provide against it, no readiness, or expedients for the occasion, or spirit to use them, even if they occur. We must think again before we determine, and thus the opportunity for action is lost. While we are considering the very best possible mode of gaining an object, we find that it has slipped through our fingers, or that others have laid rude, fearless hands upon it. The youthful tyro reluctantly discovers that the ways of the world are not his ways, nor their thoughts his thoughts. Perhaps the old monastic institutions were not in this respect unwise, which carried on to the end of life the secluded habits and romantic associations with which it began, and which created a privileged world for the inhabitants, distinct from the common world of men and women. You will bring with you from your books and solitary reveries a wrong measure of men and things, unless you correct it by careful experience and mixed observation. You will raise your standard of character as much too high at first as from disappointed expectation it will sink too low afterwards. The best qualifier of this theoretical *mania*, and of the dreams of poets and moralists, (who both treat of things as *they ought to be* and not as *they are*,) is in one sense to be found in some of our own popular writers, such as our Novelists and periodical Essayists. But you had, after all, better wait and see what things are than try to anticipate the results. You know more of a road by having travelled it than by all the conjectures and descriptions in the world. You will find the business of life conducted on a much more varied and individual scale than you would expect. People will be concerned about a thousand things that you have no idea of, and will be utterly indifferent to what you feel the greatest interest in. You will find good and evil, folly and discretion, more mingled, and the shades of character running more into each other than they do in the ethical charts. No one is equally wise or guarded at all points, and it is seldom that any one is quite a fool. Do not be surprised, when you go out into the world, to find men talk exceedingly well on different subjects, who do not derive their information immediately from books. In the first place, the light of books is diffused very much abroad in the world in conversation and at second-hand; and besides, common sense is not a monopoly, and experience and observation are sources of information open to the man of the world as well as to the retired student. If you know more of the outline and principles, he knows more of the details and "practique part of life." A man may discuss the adventures of a campaign in which he was engaged very agreeably without having read the *Retreat of the Ten Thousand*, or give a singular account of the method of drying teas in China without being a profound chemist. It is the vice of scholars to suppose that there is no knowledge in the world but that of books. Do you avoid it, I conjure you; and thereby save yourself the pain and mortification that must ensue from finding out your mistake continually!

Gravity is one great ingredient in the conduct of life, and perhaps a certain share of it is hardly to be dispensed with. Few people can afford to be quite unaffected. At any rate, do not put your worst qualities foremost. Do not seek to distinguish yourself by being ridiculous; nor entertain that miserable ambition to be the sport and butt of the company. By aiming at a certain standard of behaviour or intellect, you will at least show your taste and value for what is excellent. There are those who *blurt* out their good things with so little heed of what they are about that no one thinks any thing of them; as others by keeping their folly to themselves gain the reputation of wisdom. Do not, however, affect to speak only in oracles, or to deal in *bon-mots*: condescend to the level of the company, and be free and accessible to all persons. Express whatever occurs to you, that cannot offend others or hurt yourself. Keep some opinions to yourself. Say what you please of others, but never repeat what you hear said of them to themselves. If you have nothing better to offer, laugh with the witty, assent to the wise: they will not think the worse of you for it. Listen to information on subjects you are unacquainted with, instead of always striving to lead the conversation to some favourite one of your own. By the last method you will shine, but will not improve. I am ashamed myself ever to open my lips on any question I have ever written upon. It is much more difficult to be able to converse on an equality with a number of persons in turn, than to soar above their heads, and excite the stupid gaze of all companies by bestriding some senseless topic of your own and confounding the understandings of those who are ignorant of it. Be not too fond of argument. Indeed, by going much into company (which I do not, however, wish you to do) you will be weaned from this practice, if you set out with it. Rather suggest what remarks may have occurred to you on a subject than aim at dictating your opinions to others or at defending yourself at all points. You will learn more by agreeing in the main with others and entering into their trains of thinking, than by contradicting and urging them to extremities. Avoid singularity of opinion as well as of every thing else. Sound conclusions come with practical knowledge, rather than with speculative refinements: in what we really understand, we reason but little. Long-winded disputes fill up the place of common sense and candid inquiry. Do not imagine that you will make people friends by showing your superiority over them: it is what they will neither admit nor forgive, unless you have a high and acknowledged reputation beforehand, which renders this sort of petty vanity more inexcusable. Seek to gain the good-will of others, rather than to extort their applause; and to this end be neither too tenacious of your own claims, nor inclined to press too hard on their weaknesses.

Do not affect the society of your inferiors in rank, nor court that of the great. There can be no real sympathy in either case. The first will consider you as a restraint upon them, and the last as an intruder or *upon sufferance*. It is not a desirable distinction to be admitted into company as a man of talents. You are a mark for invidious observation. If you say nothing, or merely behave with common propriety and simplicity, you seem to have no busi ness there. If you make a studied display of yourself, it is arrogating a consequence you have no right to. If you are contented to pass as an indifferent person, they despise you; if you distinguish yourself, and show more knowledge, wit, or taste than they do, they hate you for it. You have no alternative. I would rather be asked out to sing than to talk. Every one does not pretend to a fine voice, but every one fancies he has as much understanding as another. Indeed the secret of this sort of intercourse has been pretty well found out. Literary men are seldom invited to the tables of the great; they send for players and musicians, as they keep monkeys and parrots!

I would not, however, have you run away with a notion that the rich are knaves or that lords are fools. They are for what I know as honest and as wise as other people. But it is a trick of our self-love, supposing that another has the decided advantage of us in one way, to strike a balance by taking it for granted (as a moral antithesis) that he must be as much beneath us in those qualities on which we plume ourselves, and which we would appropriate almost entirely to our own use. It is hard indeed if others are raised above us not only by the gifts of fortune, but of understanding too. It is not to be credited. People have an unwillingness to admit that the House of Lords can be equal in talent to the House of Commons. So in the other sex, if a woman is handsome, she is an idiot, or no better than she should be: in ours, if a man is worth a million of money, he is a miser, a fellow that cannot spell his own name, or a poor creature in some way, to bring him to our level. This is malice, and not truth. Believe all the good you can of every one. Do not measure others by yourself. If they have advantages which you have not, let your liberality keep pace with their good fortune. Envy no one, and you need envy no one. If you have but the magnanimity to allow merit wherever you see it—understanding in a lord or wit in a cobler—this temper of mind will stand you instead of many accomplishments. Think no man too happy. Raphael died young: Milton had the misfortune to be blind. If any one is vain or proud, it is from folly or ignorance. Those who pique themselves excessively on some one thing, have but that one thing to pique themselves upon, as languages, mechanics, &c. I do not say that this is not an enviable delusion where it is not liable to be disturbed ; but at present knowledge is too much diffused and pretensions come too much into collision for this to be long the case ; and it is better not to form such a prejudice at first than to have it to undo all the rest of one's life. If you learn any two things, though they may put you out of conceit one with the other, they will effectually cure you of any conceit you might have of yourself, by showing the variety and scope there is in the human mind beyond the limits you had set to it.

You were convinced the first day that you could not learn Latin, which now you find easy. Be taught from this, not to think other obstacles insurmountable, that you may meet with in the course of your life, though they seem so at first sight.

Attend above all things to your health ; or rather, do nothing wilfully to impair it. Use exercise, abstinence, and regular hours. Drink water when you are alone, and wine or very little spirits in company. It is the last that are ruinous by leading to unlimited excess. There is not the same headlong *impetus* in wine. But one glass of brandy and water makes you want another, that other makes you want a third, and so on, in an increased proportion. Therefore no one can stop midway who does not possess the resolution to abstain altogether ; for the inclination is sharpened with its indulgence. Never gamble. Or if you play for any thing, never do so for what will give you uneasiness the next day. Be not precise in these matters : but do not pass certain limits, which it is difficult to recover. Do nothing in the irritation of the moment, but take time to reflect. Because you have done one foolish thing, do not do another ; nor throw away your health or reputation or comfort, to thwart impertinent advice. Avoid a spirit of contradiction, both in words and actions. Do not aim at what is beyond your reach, but at what is within it. Indulge in calm and pleasing pursuits, rather than violent excitements ; and learn to conquer your own will, instead of striving to obtain the mastery of that of others.

With respect to your friends, I would wish you to choose them neither from caprice nor accident, and to adhere to them as long as you can. Do not take a surfeit of friendship, through over sanguine enthusiasm, nor expect it to last for ever. Always speak well of those with whom you have once been intimate, or take some part of the censure you bestow on them to yourself. Never quarrel with tried friends, or those whom you wish to continue such. Wounds of this kind are sure to open again. When once the prejudice is removed that sheathes defects, familiarity only causes jealousy and distrust. Do not keep on with a mockery of friendship after the substance is gone—but part, while you can part friends. Bury the carcase of friendship: it is not worth embalming.

As to the books you will have to read by choice or for amusement, the best are the commonest. The names of many of them are already familiar to you. Read them as you grow up with all the satisfaction in your power, and make much of them. It is perhaps the greatest pleasure you will have in life, the one you will think of longest, and repent of least. If my life had been more full of calamity than it has been (much more than I hope yours will be) I would live it over again, my poor little boy, to have read the books I did in my youth.

In politics I wish you to be an honest man, but no brawler. Hate injustice and falsehood for your own sake. Be neither a martyr, nor a sycophant. Wish well to the world without expecting to see it much better than it is; and do not gratify the enemies of liberty by putting yourself at their mercy, if it can be avoided with honour.

If you ever marry, I would wish you to marry the woman you like. Do not be guided by the recommendation of friends. Nothing will atone for or overcome an original distaste. It will only increase from intimacy; and if you are to live separate, it is better not to come together. There is no use in dragging a chain through life, unless it binds one to the object we love. Choose a mistress from among your equals. You will be able to understand her character better, and she will be more likely to understand yours. Those in an inferior station to yourself will doubt your good intentions, and misapprehend your plainest expressions. All that you swear is to them a riddle or downright nonsense. You cannot by possibility translate your thoughts into their dialect. They will be ignorant of the meaning of half you say, and laugh at the rest. As mistresses, they will have no sympathy with you; and as wives, you can have none with them. But they will do all they can to thwart you, and to retrieve themselves in their own opinion by trick and low cunning. No woman ever married into a family above herself that did not try to make all the mischief she could in it.—Be not in haste to marry, nor to engage your affections, where there is no probability of a return. Do not fancy every woman you see the heroine of a romance, a Sophia Western, a Clarissa, or a Julia; and yourself the potential hero of it, Tom Jones, Lovelace, or St. Preux. Avoid this error as you would shrink back from a precipice. All your fine sentiments and romantic notions will (of themselves) make no more impression on one of these delicate creatures, than on a piece of marble. Their soft bosoms are steel to your amorous refinements, if you have no other pretensions. It is not what you think of them that determines their choice, but what they think of you. Endeavour, if you would escape lingering torments and the gnawing of the worm that dies not, to find out this, and to abide by the issue. We trifle with, make sport of, and despise those who are attached to us, and follow those that fly from us. "We hunt the wind, we worship a statue, cry aloud to the desert." Do you, my dear boy, stop short in this career, if you find yourself setting out in it, and make up your mind to this, that if a woman does not like you of her own accord, that is, from involuntary impressions, nothing you can say or do or suffer for her sake will make her, but will set her the more against you. So the song goes—

"Quit, quit for shame; this will not move:
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing will make her, the devil take her!"

There is but one other point on which I meant to speak to you, and that is the choice of a profession. This, probably, had better be left to time or accident or your own inclination. You have a very fine ear, but I have somehow a prejudice against men-singers, and indeed against the stage altogether. It is an uncertain and ungrateful soil. All professions are bad that depend on reputation, which is "as often got without merit as lost without deserving." Yet I cannot easily reconcile myself to your being a slave to business, and I shall hardly be able to leave you an independence. A situation in a public office is secure, but laborious and mechanical, and without the two great springs of life, Hope and Fear. Perhaps, however, it might ensure you a competence, and leave you leisure for some other favourite amusement or pursuit. I have said all reputation is hazardous, hard to win, harder to keep. Many never attain a glimpse of what they have all their lives been looking for, and others survive a passing shadow of it. Yet if I were to name one pursuit rather than another, I should wish you to be a good painter, if such a thing could be hoped. I have failed in this myself, and should wish you to be able to do what I have not—to paint like Claude or Rembrandt or Guido or Vandyke, if it were possible. Artists, I think, who have succeeded in their chief object, live to be old, and are agreeable old men. Their minds keep alive to the last. Cosway's spirits never flagged till after ninety, and Nollekens, though blind, passed all his mornings in giving directions about some group or bust in his workshop. You have seen Mr. ——, that delightful specimen of the last age. With what avidity he takes up his pencil, or lays it down again to talk of numberless things! His eye has not lost its lustre, nor "paled its ineffectual fire." His body is a shadow: he himself is a pure spirit. There is a kind of immortality about this sort of ideal and visionary existence that dallies with Fate and baffles the grim monster, Death. If I thought you could make as clever an artist and arrive at such an agreeable old age as Mr. ——, I should declare at once for your devoting yourself to this enchanting profession; and in that reliance, should feel less regret at some of my own disappointments, and little anxiety on your account!

ESSAY XXIII.

The Indian Jugglers.

Coming forward and seating himself on the ground in his white dress and tightened turban, the chief of the Indian Jugglers begins with tossing up two brass balls, which is what any of us could do, and concludes with keeping up four at the same time, which is what none of us could do to save our lives, nor if we were to take our whole lives to do it in. Is it then a trifling power we see at work, or is it not something next to miraculous? It is the utmost stretch of human ingenuity, which nothing but the bending the faculties of body and mind to it from the tenderest infancy with incessant, ever-anxious application, up to manhood, can accomplish or make even a slight approach to. Man, thou art a wonderful animal, and thy ways past finding out! Thou canst do strange things, but thou turnest them to little account! To conceive of this effort of extraordinary dexterity distracts the imagination and makes admiration breathless. Yet it costs nothing to the performer, any more than if it were a mere mechanical deception with which he had nothing to do but to watch and laugh at the astonishment of the spectators. A single error of a hair's breadth, of the smallest conceivable portion of time, would be fatal: the precision of the movements must be like a mathematical truth, their rapidity is like lightning. To catch four balls in succession in less than a second of time, and deliver them back so as to return with seeming consciousness to the hand again, to make them revolve round him at certain intervals, like the planets in their spheres, to make them chase one another like sparkles of fire, or shoot up like flowers or meteors, to throw them behind his back and twine them round his neck like ribbons or like serpents, to do what appears an impossibility, and to do it with all the ease, the grace, the carelessness imaginable, to laugh at, to play with the glittering mockeries, to follow them with his eye as if he could fascinate them with its lambent fire or as if he had only to see that they kept time with the music on the stage—there is something in all this which he who does not admire may be quite sure he never really admired any thing in the whole course of his life. It is skill surmounting difficulty, and beauty triumphing over skill. It seems as if the difficulty once mastered naturally resolved itself into ease and grace, and as if to be overcome at all, it must be overcome without an effort. The smallest awkwardness or want of pliancy or self-possession would stop the whole process. It is the work of witchcraft, and yet sport for children. Some of the other feats are quite as curious and wonderful, such as the balancing the artificial tree and shooting a bird from each branch through a quill; though none of them have the elegance or facility of the keeping up of the brass balls. You are in pain for the result and glad when the experiment is over; they are not accompanied with the same unmixed, unchecked delight as the former; and I would not give much to be merely astonished without being pleased at the same time. As to the swallowing of the sword, the police ought to interfere to prevent it. When I saw the Indian Juggler do the same things before, his feet were bare, and he had large rings on the toes, which kept turning round all the time of the performance, as if they moved of themselves. The hearing a speech in Parliament, drawled or stammered out by the Honourable Member or the Noble Lord, the ringing the changes on their common-places, which any one could repeat after them as well as they, stirs me not a jot, shakes not my good opinion of myself: but the seeing the Indian Jugglers does. It makes me ashamed of myself. I ask what there is that I can do as well as this? Nothing. What have I been doing all my life? Have I been idle, or have I nothing to show for all my labour and pains? Or have I passed my time in pouring words like water into empty sieves, rolling a stone up a hill and then down again, trying to prove an argument in the teeth of facts, and looking for causes in the dark, and not finding them? Is there no one thing in which I can challenge competition, that I can bring as an instance of exact perfection, in which others cannot find a flaw? The utmost I can pretend to is to write a description of what this fellow can do. I can write a book: so can many others who have not even learned to spell. What abortions are these Essays! What errors, what ill-pieced transitions, what crooked reasons, what lame conclusions! How little is made out, and that little how ill! Yet they are the best I can do. I endeavour to recollect all I have ever observed or thought upon a subject, and to express it as nearly as I can. Instead of writing on four subjects at a time, it is as much as I can manage to keep the thread of one discourse clear and unentangled. I have also time on my hands to correct my opinions, and polish my periods: but the one I cannot, and the other I will not do. I am fond of arguing: yet with a good deal of pains and practice it is often as much as I can do to beat my man though he may be a very indifferent hand. A common fencer would disarm his adversary in the twinkling of an eye, unless he were a professor like himself. A stroke of wit will sometimes produce this effect, but there is no such power or superiority in sense or reasoning. There is no complete mastery of execution to be shown there: and you hardly know the professor from the impudent pretender or the mere clown.*

I have always had this feeling of the inefficacy and slow progress of intellectual compared with mechanical excellence, and it has always made me somewhat dissatisfied. It is a great many years since I saw Richer, the famous rope-dancer, perform at Sadler's Wells. He was matchless in his art, and added to his extraordinary skill exquisite ease, and unaffected, natural grace. I was at that time employed in copying a half-length

* The celebrated Peter Pindar (Dr. Wolcot) first discovered and brought out the talents of the late Mr. Opie, the painter. He was a poor Cornish boy, and was out at work in the fields, when the poet went in search of him. "Well, my lad, can you go and bring me your very best picture?" The other flew like lightning, and soon came back with what he considered as his master-piece. The stranger looked at it, and the young artist, after waiting for some time without his giving any opinion, at length exclaimed eagerly, "Well, what do you think of it?"—"Think of it?" said Wolcot, "why, I think you ought to be ashamed of it—that you who might do so well, do no better!" The same answer would have applied to this artist's latest performances, that had been suggested by one of his earliest efforts.

picture of Sir Joshua Reynolds's; and it put me out of conceit with it. How ill this part was made out in the drawing! How heavy, how slovenly this other was painted! I could not help saying to myself, "If the rope-dancer had performed his task in this manner, leaving so many gaps and botches in his work, he would have broke his neck long ago; I should never have seen that vigorous elasticity of nerve and precision of movement!"—Is it then so easy an undertaking (comparatively) to dance on a tight-rope? Let any one, who thinks so, get up and try. There is the thing. It is that which at first we cannot do at all, which in the end is done to such perfection. To account for this in some degree, I might observe that mechanical dexterity is confined to doing some one particular thing, which you can repeat as often as you please, in which you know whether you succeed or fail, and where the point of perfection consists in succeeding in a given undertaking. In mechanical efforts, you improve by perpetual practice, and you do so infallibly, because the object to be attained is not a matter of taste or fancy or opinion, but of actual experiment, in which you must either do the thing or not do it. If a man is put to aim at a mark with a bow and arrow, he must hit it or miss it, that's certain. He cannot deceive himself, and go on shooting wide or falling short, and still fancy that he is making progress. The distinction between right and wrong, between true and false, is here palpable; and he must either correct his aim or persevere in his error with his eyes open, for which there is neither excuse nor temptation. If a man is learning to dance on a rope, if he does not mind what he is about, he will break his neck. After that, it will be in vain for him to argue that he did not make a false step. His situation is not like that of Goldsmith's pedagogue—

> "In argument they own'd his wondrous skill,
> And e'en though vanquish'd, he could argue still."

Danger is a good teacher, and makes apt scholars. So are disgrace, defeat, exposure to immediate scorn and laughter. There is no opportunity in such cases for self-delusion, no idling time away, being off your guard (or you must take the consequences)

—neither is there any room for humour or caprice or prejudice. If the Indian Juggler were to play tricks in throwing up the three case-knives, which keep their positions like the leaves of a crocus in the air, he would cut his fingers. I can make a very bad antithesis without cutting my fingers. The tact of style is more ambiguous than that of double-edged instruments. If the Juggler were told that by flinging himself under the wheels of the Juggernaut, when the idol issues forth on a gaudy day, he would immediately be transported into Paradise, he might believe it, and nobody could disprove it. So the Brahmins may say what they please on that subject, may build up dogmas and mysteries without end, and not be detected: but their ingenious countryman cannot persuade the frequenters of the Olympic Theatre that he performs a number of astonishing feats without actually giving proofs of what he says. There is then in this sort of manual dexterity, first a gradual aptitude acquired tc a given exertion of muscular power, from constant repetition, and in the next place, an exact knowledge how much is still wanting and necessary to be supplied. The obvious test is to increase the effort or nicety of the operation, and still to find it come true. The muscles ply instinctively to the dictates of habit. Certain movements and impressions of the hand and eye, having been repeated together an infinite number of times, are unconsciously but unavoidably cemented into closer and closer union; the limbs require little more than to be put in motion for them to follow a regular track with ease and certainty; so that the mere intention of the will acts mathematically like touching the spring of a machine, and you come with Locksley in Ivanhoe, in shooting at a mark, "to allow for the wind."

Farther, what is meant by perfection in mechanical exercises is the performing certain feats to a uniform nicety, that is, in fact, undertaking no more than you can perform. You task yourself, the limit you fix is optional, and no more than human industry and skill can attain to: but you have no abstract, independent standard of difficulty or excellence (other than the extent of your own powers). Thus he who can keep up four brass balls does this to *perfection;* but he cannot keep up five at the same instant, and would fail every time he attempted it. That is, the mechanical performer undertakes to emulate himself, not to equal another.* But the artist undertakes to imitate another, or to do what nature has done, and this it appears is more difficult, viz. to copy what she has set before us in the face of nature or "human face divine," entire and without a blemish, than to keep up four brass balls at the same instant, for the one is done by the power of human skill and industry, and the other never was nor will be. Upon the whole, therefore, I have more respect for Reynolds, than I have for Richer; for, happen how it will, there have been more people in the world who could dance on a rope like the one than who could paint like Sir Joshua. The latter was but a bungler in his profession to the other, it is true; but then he had a harder task-master to obey, whose will was more wayward and obscure, and whose instructions it was more difficult to practise. You can put a child apprentice to a tumbler or rope-dancer with a comfortable prospect of success, if they are but sound of wind and limb: but you cannot do the same thing in painting. The odds are a million to one. You may make indeed as many H——s and H——s, as you put into that sort of machine, but not one Reynolds amongst them all, with his grace, his grandeur, his blandness of *gusto*, "in tones and gestures hit," unless you could make the man over again. To snatch this grace beyond the reach of art is then the height of art—where fine art begins, and where mechanical skill ends. The soft suffusion of the soul, the speechless breathing eloquence, the looks "commercing with the skies," the ever-shifting forms of an eternal principle, that which is seen but for a moment, but dwells in the heart always, and is only seized as it passes by strong and secret sympathy, must be taught by nature and genius, not by rules or study. It is suggested by feeling, not by laborious microscopic inspection: in seeking for it without, we lose the harmonious clue to it within: and in aiming to grasp the substance, we let the very spirit of art evaporate. In a word, the objects of fine art are not the objects of sight but as these last are the objects of taste and imagination, that is, as they appeal to the sense of beauty, of pleasure, and of power in the human breast, and are explained by that finer sense, and revealed in their inner structure to the eye in return. Nature is also a language. Objects, like words, have a meaning; and the true artist is the interpreter of this language, which he can only do by knowing its application to a thousand other objects in a thousand other situations. Thus the eye is too blind a guide of itself to distinguish between the warm or cold tone of a deep blue sky, but another sense acts as a monitor to it, and does not err. The colour of the leaves in autumn would be nothing without the feeling that accompanies it; but it is that feeling that stamps them on the canvas, faded, seared, blighted, shrinking from the winter's flaw, and makes the sight as true as touch—

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* If two persons play against each other at any game, one of them necessarily fails.

> "And visions, as poetic eyes avow,
> Cling to each leaf and hang on every bough."

The more ethereal, evanescent, more refined and sublime part of art is the seeing nature through the medium of sentiment and passion, as each object is a symbol of the affections and a link in the chain of our endless being. But the unravelling this mysterious web of thought and feeling is alone in the Muse's gift, namely, in the power of that trembling sensibility which is awake to every change and every modification of its ever-varying impressions, that

> "Thrills in each nerve, and lives along the line."

This power is indifferently called genius, imagination, feeling, taste; but the manner in which it acts upon the mind can neither be defined by abstract rules, as is the case in science, nor verified by continual unvarying experiments, as is the case in mechanical performances. The mechanical excellence of the Dutch painters in colouring and handling is that which comes the nearest in fine art to the perfection of certain manual exhibitions of skill. The truth of the effect and the facility with which it is produced are equally admirable. Up to a certain point, every thing is faultless. The hand and eye have done their part. There is only a want of taste and genius. It is after we enter upon that enchanted ground that the human mind begins to droop and flag as in a strange road, or in a thick mist, benighted and making little way with many attempts and many failures, and that the best of us only escape with half a triumph. The undefined and the imaginary are the regions that we must pass like Satan, difficult and doubtful, "half flying, half on foot." The object in sense is a positive thing, and execution comes with practice.

Cleverness is a certain *knack* or aptitude at doing certain things, which depend more on a particular adroitness and off-hand readiness than on force or perseverance, such as making puns, making epigrams, making extempore verses, mimicking the company, mimicking a style, &c. Cleverness is either liveliness and smartness, or something answering to *slight of hand*, like letting a glass fall sideways off a table, or else a trick, like knowing the secret spring of a watch. Accomplishments are certain external graces, which are to be learnt from others, and which are easily displayed to the admiration of the beholder, viz. dancing, riding, fencing, music, and so on. These ornamental acquirements are only proper to those who are at ease in mind and fortune. I know an individual who, if he had been born to an estate of five thousand a year, would have been the most accomplished gentleman of the age. He would have been the delight and envy of the circle in which he moved—would have graced by his manners the liberality flowing from the openness of his heart, would have laughed with the women, have argued with the men, have said good things and written agreeable ones, have taken a hand at piquet or the lead at the harpsichord, and have set and sung his own verses—*nugæ canoræ*—with tenderness and spirit; a Rochester without the vice, a modern Surrey! As it is, all these capabilities of excellence stand in his way. He is too versatile for a professional man, not dull enough for a political drudge, too gay to be happy, too thoughtless to be rich. He wants the enthusiasm of the poet, the severity of the prose-writer, and the application of the man of business. Talent is the capacity of doing any thing that depends on application and industry, such as writing a criticism, making a speech, studying the law. Talent differs from genius, as voluntary differs from involuntary power. Ingenuity is genius in trifles, greatness is genius in undertakings of much pith and moment. A clever or ingenious man is one who can do any thing well, whether it is worth doing or not: a great man is one who can do that which when done is of the highest importance. Themistocles said he could not play on the flute, but that he could make of a small city a great one. This gives one a pretty good idea of the distinction in question.

Greatness is great power, producing great effects. It is not enough that a man has great power in himself, he must show it to all the world in a way that cannot be hid or gainsaid. He must fill up a certain idea in the public mind. I have no other notion of greatness than this two-fold definition, great results springing from great inherent energy. The great in visible objects has relation to that which extends over space: the great in mental ones has to do with space and time. No man is truly great, who is great only in his life-time. The test of greatness is the page of history. Nothing can be said to be great that has a distinct limit, or that borders on something evidently greater than itself. Besides, what is short-lived and pampered into mere notoriety, is of a gross and vulgar quality in itself. A Lord Mayor is hardly a great man. A city orator or patriot of the day only show, by reaching the height of their wishes, the distance they are at from any true ambition. Popularity is neither fame nor greatness. A king (as such) is not a great man. He has great power, but it is not his own. He merely wields the lever of the state, which a child, an idiot, or a madman can do. It is the office, not the man we gaze at. Any one else in the same situation would be just as much an object of abject curiosity. We laugh at the country-girl who having seen a king expressed her disappointment by saying, "Why, he is only a man!" Yet, knowing this, we run to see a king as if he was something more than a man. To display the greatest powers, unless they are applied to great purposes, makes nothing for the character of greatness. To throw a barley-corn through the eye of a needle, to multiply nine figures by nine in the memory, argues infinite dexterity of body and capacity of mind, but nothing comes of either. There is a surprising power at work, but the effects are not proportionate, or such as take hold of the imagination. To impress the idea of power on others, they must be made in some way to feel it. It must be communicated to their understandings in the shape of an increase of knowledge, or it must subdue and overawe them by subjecting their wills. Admiration to be solid and lasting must be founded on proofs from which we have no means of escaping; it is neither a slight nor a voluntary gift. A mathematician who solves a profound problem, a poet who creates an image of beauty in the mind that was not there before, imparts knowledge and power to others, in which his greatness and his fame consists, and on which it reposes. Jedediah Buxton will be forgotten; but Napier's bones will live. Lawgivers, philosophers, founders of religion, conquerors and heroes, inventors and great geniuses in arts and sciences, are great men, for they are great public benefactors, or formidable scourges to mankind. Among ourselves, Shakespear, Newton, Bacon, Milton, Cromwell, were great men, for they showed great power by acts and thoughts, which have not yet been consigned to oblivion. They must needs be men of lofty stature, whose shadows lengthen out to remote posterity. A great farce-writer may be a great man; for Molière was but a great farce-writer. In my mind, the author of Don Quixote was a great man. So have there been many others. A great chess-player is not a great man, for he leaves the world as he found it. No act terminating in itself constitutes greatness. This will apply to all displays of power or trials of skill, which are confined to the momentary, individual effort, and construct no permanent image or trophy of themselves without them. Is not an actor then a great man, because "he dies and leaves the world no copy?" I must make an exception for Mrs. Siddons, or else give up my definition of greatness for her sake. A man at the top of his profession is not therefore a great man. He is great in his way, but that is all, unless he shows the marks of a great moving intellect, so that we trace the master-mind, and can sympathize with the springs that urge him on. The rest is but a craft or *mystery*. John Hunter was a great man—*that* any one might see without the smallest skill in surgery. His style and manner showed the man. He would set about cutting up the carcase of a whale with the same greatness of *gusto* that Michael Angelo would have hewn a block of marble. Lord Nelson was a great naval commander; but for myself, I have not much opinion of a seafaring life. Sir Humphrey Davy is a great chemist, but I am not sure that he is a great man. I am not a bit the wiser for any of his discoveries, nor I never met with any one that was. But it is in the nature of greatness to propagate an idea of itself, as wave impels wave, circle without circle. It is a contradiction in terms for a coxcomb to be a great man. A really great man has always an idea of something greater than himself. I have observed that certain sectaries and polemical writers have no higher compliment to pay their most shining lights than to say that "Such a one was a considerable man in his day." Some new elucidation of a text sets aside the authority of the old interpretation, and a "great scholar's memory outlives him half a century," at the utmost. A rich man is not a great man, except to his dependants and his steward. A lord is a great man in the idea we have of his ancestry, and probably of himself, if we know nothing of him but his title. I have heard a story of two bishops, one of whom said (speaking of St. Peter's at Rome) that when he first entered it, he was rather awe-struck, but that as he walked up it, his mind seemed to swell and dilate with it, and at last to fill the whole building—the other said that as he saw more of it, he appeared to himself to grow less and less every step he took, and in the end to dwindle into nothing. This was in some respects a striking picture of a great and little mind—for greatness sympathizes with greatness, and littleness shrinks into itself. The one might have become a Wolsey; the other was only fit to become a mendicant friar—or there might have been court-reasons for making him a bishop. The French have to me a character of littleness in all about them; but they have produced three great men that belong to every country, Molière Rabelais, and Montaigne.

To return from this digression, and conclude the Essay. A singular instance of manual dexterity was shown in the person of the late John Cavanagh, whom I have several times seen. His death was celebrated at the time in an article in the Examiner newspaper, (Feb. 7, 1819,) written apparently between jest and earnest: but as it is *pat* to our purpose, and falls in with my own way of considering such subjects, I shall here take leave to quote it.

"Died at his house in Burbage-street, St. Giles's, John Cavanagh, the famous hand fives-player. When a person dies, who does any one thing better than any one else in the world, which so many others are trying to do well, it leaves a gap in society. It is not likely that any one will now see the game of fives played in its perfection for many years to come—for Cavanagh is dead, and has not left his peer behind him. It may be said that there are things of more importance than striking a ball against a wall—there are things indeed that make more noise and do as little good, such as making war and peace, making speeches and answering them; making verses and blotting them; making money and throwing it away. But the game of fives is what no one despises who has ever played at it. It is the finest exercise for the body, and the best relaxation for the mind. The Roman poet said that 'Care mounted behind the horseman and stuck to his skirts.' But this remark would not have applied to the fives-player. He who takes to playing at fives is twice young. He feels neither the past nor future 'in the instant.' Debts, taxes, 'domestic treason, foreign levy, nothing can touch him further.' He has no other wish, no other thought, from the moment the game begins, but that of striking the ball, of placing it, of *making* it! This Cavanagh was sure to do. Whenever he touched the ball, there was an end of the chase. His eye was certain, his hand fatal, his presence of mind complete. He could do what he pleased, and he always knew exactly what to do. He saw the whole game, and played it; took instant advantage of his adversary's weakness, and recovered balls, as if by a miracle and from sudden thought, that every one gave for lost. He had equal power and skill, quickness, and judgment. He could either outwit his antagonist by finesse, or beat him by main strength. Sometimes, when he seemed preparing to send the ball with the full swing of his arm, he would by a slight turn of his wrist drop it within an inch of the line. In general, the ball came from his hand as if from a racket, in a straight horizontal line; so that it was in vain to attempt to overtake or stop it. As it was said of a great orator that he never was at a loss for a word, and for the properest word, so Cavanagh always could tell the degree of force necessary to be given to a ball, and the precise direction in which it should be sent. He did his work with the greatest ease; never took more pains than was necessary; and while others were fagging themselves to death, was as cool and collected as if he had just entered the court. His style of play was as remarkable as his power of execution. He had no affectation, no trifling. He did not throw away the game to show off an attitude, or try an experiment. He was a fine, sensible, manly player, who did what he could, but that was more than any one else could even affect to do. His blows were not undecided and ineffectual—lumbering like Mr. Wordsworth's epic poetry, nor wavering like Mr. Coleridge's lyric prose, nor short of the mark like Mr. Brougham's speeches, nor wide of it like Mr. Canning's wit, nor foul like the *Quarterly*, nct *let* balls like the *Edinburgh Review*. Cobbett and Junius together would have made a Cavanagh. He was the best *up-hill* player in the world; even when his adversary was fourteen, he would play on the same or better, and as he never flung away the game through carelessness and conceit, he never gave it up through laziness or want of heart. The only peculiarity of his play was that he never *volleyed*, but let the balls hop; but if they rose an inch from the ground, he never missed having them. There was not only nobody equal, but nobody second to him. It is supposed that he could give any other player half the game, or beat them with his left hand. His service was tremendous. He once played Woodward and Meredith together (two of the best players in England) in the Fives-court, St. Martin's-street, and made seven and twenty aces following by services alone—a thing unheard of. He another time played Peru, who was considered a first-rate fives-player, a match of the best out of five games, and in the three first games, which of course decided the match, Peru got only one ace. Cavanagh was an Irishman by birth, and a house-painter by profession. He had once laid aside his working-dress, and walked up, in his smartest clothes, to the Rosemary Branch to have an afternoon's pleasure. A person accosted him, and asked him if he would have a game. So they agreed to play for half a crown a game, and a bottle of cider. The first game began—it was seven, eight, ten, thirteen, fourteen, all. Cavanagh won it. The next was the same. They played on, and each game was hardly contested. 'There,' said the unconscious fives-player, 'there was a stroke that Cavanagh could not take: I never played better in my life, and yet I can't win a game. I don't know how it is.' However, they played on, Cavanagh winning every game, and the by-standers drinking the cider and laughing all the time. In the twelfth game, when Cavanagh was only four, and the stranger thirteen, a person came in, and said, 'What! are you here, Cavanagh?' The words were no sooner pronounced than the astonished player let the ball drop from his hand, and saying, 'What! have I been breaking my heart all this time to beat Cavanagh?' refused to make another effort. 'And yet, I give you my word,' said Cavanagh, telling the story with some triumph, 'I played all the while with my clenched fist.'—He used frequently to play matches at Copenhagen-house for wagers and dinners. The wall against which they play is the same that supports the kitchen-chimney, and when the wall resounded louder than usual, the cooks exclaimed, 'Those are the Irishman's balls,' and the joints trembled on the spit!—Goldsmith consoled himself that there were places where he too was admired: and Cavanagh was the admiration of all the fives-courts, where he ever played. Mr. Powell, when he played matches in the Court in St. Martin's-street, used to fill his gallery at half-a-crown a head, with amateurs and admirers of talent in whatever department it is shown. He could not have shown himself in any ground in England, but he would have been immediately surrounded with inquisitive gazers, trying to find out in what part of his frame his unrivalled skill lay, as politicians wonder to see the balance of Europe suspended in Lord Castlereagh's face, and admire the trophies of the British navy lurking under Mr. Croker's hanging brow. Now Cavanagh was as good-looking a man as the Noble Lord, and much better looking than the Right Hon. Secretary. He had a clear, open countenance, and did not look sideways or down, like Mr. Murray the bookseller. He was a young fellow of sense, humour, and courage. He once had a quarrel with a waterman at Hungerford-stairs, and they say, served him out in great style. In a word, there are hundreds at this day, who cannot mention his name without admiration, as the best fives-player that perhaps ever lived (the greatest excellence of which they have any notion)—and the noisy shout of the ring happily stood him in stead of the unheard voice of posterity!—The only person who seems to have excelled as much in another way as Cavanagh did in his, was the late John Davies, the racket-player. It was remarked of him that he did not seem to follow the ball, but the ball seemed to follow him. Give him a foot of wall, and he was sure to make the ball. The four best racket-players of that day were Jack Spines, Jem Harding, Armitage, and Church. Davies could give any one of these two hands a time, that is, half the game, and each of these, at their best, could give the best player now in London the same odds. Such are the gradations in all exertions of human skill and art. He once played four capital players together, and beat them. He was also a first-rate tennis-player, and an excellent fives-player. In the Fleet or King's Bench, he would have stood against Powell, who was reckoned the best open-ground player of his time. This last-mentioned player is at present the keeper of the Fives-court, and we might recommend to him for a motto over his door—'Who enters here, forgets himself, his country, and his friends.' And the best of it is, that by the calculation of the odds, none of the three are worth remembering!—Cavanagh died from the bursting of a blood-vessel, which prevented him from playing for the last two or three years. This, he was often heard to say, he thought hard upon him. He was fast recovering, however, when he was suddenly carried off, to the regret of all who knew him. As Mr. Peel made it a qualification of the present Speaker, Mr. Manners Sutton, that he was an excellent moral character, so Jack Cavanagh was a zealous Catholic, and could not be persuaded to eat meat on a Friday, the day on which he died. We have paid this willing tribute to his memory.

"Let no rude hand deface it,
And his forlorn '*Hic Jacet.*'"

ESSAY XXIV.

On the Prose-Style of Poets.

I HAVE but an indifferent opinion of the prose-style of poets: not that it is not sometimes good, nay excellent; but it is never the better, and generally the worse, from the habit of writing verse. Poets are winged animals, and can cleave the air like birds, with ease to themselves and delight to the beholders; but like those "feathered, two-legged things," when they light upon the ground of prose and matter-of-fact, they seem not to have the same use of their feet.

What is a little extraordinary, there is a want of *rhythmus* and cadence in what they write without the help of metrical rules. Like persons who have been accustomed to sing to music, they are at a loss in the absence of the habitual accompaniment and guide to their judgment. Their style halts, totters, is loose, disjointed, and without expressive pauses or rapid movements. The measured cadence and regular *sing-song* of rhyme or blank verse have destroyed, as it were, their natural ear for the mere characteristic harmony which ought to subsist between the sound and the sense. I should almost guess the Author of Waverley to be a writer of ambling verses from the desultory vacillation and want of firmness in the march of his style. There is neither *momentum* nor elasticity in it; I mean as to the *score*, or effect upon the ear. He has improved since in his other works: to be sure, he has had practice enough.* Poets either get into this incoherent, undetermined, shuffling style, made up of "unpleasing flats and sharps," of unaccountable starts and pauses, of doubtful odds and ends, flirted about like straws in a gust of wind; or, to avoid it and steady themselves, mount into a sustained and measured prose (like the translation of Ossian's Poems, or some parts of Shaftesbury's Characteristics) which is more odious still, and as bad as being at sea in a calm. Dr. Johnson's style (particularly in his Rambler), is not free from the last objection. There is a tune in it, a mechanical recurrence of the same rise and fall in the clauses of his sentences, independent of any reference to the meaning of the text, or progress or inflection of the sense. There is the alternate roll of his cumbrous cargo of words; his periods complete their revolutions at certain stated intervals, let the matter be longer or shorter, rough or smooth, round or square, different or the same. This monotonous and balanced mode of composition may be compared to that species of portrait-painting which prevailed about a century ago, in which each face was cast in a regular and preconceived mould. The eye-brows were arched mathematically as if with a pair of compasses, and the distances between the nose and mouth, the forehead and chin, determined according to a "foregone conclusion," and the features of the identical individual were afterwards accommodated to them, how they could!*

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* Is it not a collateral proof that Sir Walter Scott is the Author of Waverley, that ever since these Novels began to appear, his Muse has been silent, till the publication of Halidon-Hill?

Horne Tooke used to maintain that no one could write a good prose style, who was not accustomed to express himself *vivâ voce*, or to talk in company. He argued that this was the fault of Addison's prose, and that its smooth, equable uniformity, and want of sharpness and spirit, arose from his not having familiarized his ear to the sound of his own voice, or at least only among friends and admirers, where there was but little collision, dramatic fluctuation, or sudden contrariety of opinion to provoke animated discussion, and give birth to different intonations and lively transitions of speech. His style (in this view of it) was not indented, nor did it project from the surface. There was no stress laid on one word more than another—it did not hurry on or stop short, or sink or swell with the occasion: it was throughout equally insipid, flowing, and harmonious, and had the effect of a studied recitation rather than of a natural discourse. This would not have happened (so the Member for Old Sarum contended) had Addison laid himself out to argue at his club, or to speak in public; for then his ear would have caught the necessary modulations of sound arising out of the feeling of the moment, and he would have transferred them unconsciously to paper. Much might be said on both sides of this question:* but Mr. Tooke was himself an unintentional confirmation of his own argument; for the tone of his written compositions is as flat and unraised as his manner of speaking was hard and dry. Of the poet it is said by some one, that

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* See the portraits of Kneller, Richardson, and others.

> "He murmurs by the running brooks
> A music sweeter than their own."

On the contrary, the celebrated person just alluded to might be said to grind the sentences between his teeth, which he afterwards committed to paper, and threw out crusts to the critics, or *bon-mots* to the Electors of Westminster (as we throw bones to the dogs,) without altering a muscle, and without the smallest tremulousness of voice or eye!† I certainly so far agree with the above theory as to conceive that no style is worth a farthing that is not calculated to be read out, or that is not allied to spirited conversation: but I at the same time think the process of modulation and inflection may be quite as complete, or more so, without the external enunciation; and that an author had better try the effect of his sentences on his stomach than on his ear. He may be deceived by the last, not by the first. No person, I imagine, can dictate a good style; or spout his own compositions with impunity. In the former case, he will flounder on before the sense or words are ready, sooner than suspend his voice in air; and in the latter, he can supply what intonation he pleases, without consulting his readers. Parliamentary speeches sometimes read well aloud; but we do not find, when such persons sit down to write, that the prose-style of public speakers and great orators is the best, most natural, or varied of all others. It has almost always either a professional twang, a mechanical rounding off, or else is stunted and unequal. Charles Fox was the most rapid and even *hurried* of speakers; but his written style halts and creeps slowly along the ground.*—A speaker is necessarily kept within bounds in expressing certain things, or in pronouncing a certain number of words, by the limits of the breath or power of respiration: certain sounds are observed to join in harmoniously or happily with others: an emphatic phrase must not be placed, where the power of utterance is enfeebled or exhausted, &c. All this must be attended to in writing, (and will be so unconsciously by a practised hand,) or there will be *hiatus in manuscriptis*. The words must be so arranged, in order to make an efficient readable style, as "to come trippingly off the tongue." Hence it seems that there is a natural measure of prose in the feeling of the subject and the power of expression in the voice, as there is an artificial one of verse in the number and co-ordination of the syllables; and I conceive that the trammels of the last do not (where they have been long worn) greatly assist the freedom or the exactness of the first.

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* Goldsmith was not a talker, though he blurted out his good things now and then: yet his style is gay and voluble enough. Pope was also a silent man; and his prose is timid and constrained, and his verse inclining to the monotonous.

† As a singular example of steadiness of nerves, Mr. Tooke on one occasion had got upon the table at a public dinner to return thanks for his health having been drank. He held a bumper of wine in his hand, but he was received with considerable opposition by one party, and at the end of the disturbance, which lasted for a quarter of an hour, he found the wine glass still full to the brim.

Again, in poetry, from the restraints in many respects, a greater number of inversions, or a latitude in the transposition of words is allowed, which is not conformable to the strict laws of prose. Consequently, a poet will be at a loss, and flounder about for the common or (as we understand it) *natural* order of words in prose-composition. Dr. Johnson endeavoured to give an air of dignity and novelty to his diction by affecting the order of words usual in poetry. Milton's prose has not only this drawback, but it has also the disadvantage of being formed on a classic model. It is like a fine translation from the Latin; and indeed, he wrote originally in Latin. The frequency of epithets and ornaments, too, is a resource for which the poet finds it difficult to obtain an equivalent. A direct, or simple prose style seems to him bald and flat; and, instead of forcing an interest in the subject by severity of description and reasoning, he is repelled from it altogether by the absence of those obvious and meretricious allurements, by which his senses and his imagination have been hitherto stimulated and dazzled. Thus there is often at the same time a want of splendour and a want of energy in what he writes, without the invocation of the Muse—*invita Minervâ*. It is like setting a rope-dancer to perform a tumbler's tricks—the hardness of the ground jars his nerves; or it is the same thing as a painter's attempting to carve a block of marble for the first time—the coldness chills him, the colourless uniformity distracts him, the precision of form demanded disheartens him. So in prose-writing, the severity of composition required damps the enthusiasm, and cuts off the resources of the poet. He is looking for beauty, when he should be seeking for truth; and aims at pleasure, which he can only communicate by increasing the sense of power in the reader. The poet spreads the colours of fancy, the illusions of his own mind, round every object, *ad libitum;* the prose-writer is compelled to extract his materials patiently and bit by bit, from his subject. What he adds of ornament, what he borrows from the pencil, must be sparing, and judiciously inserted. The first pretends to nothing but the immediate indulgence of his feelings: the last has a remote practical purpose. The one strolls out into the adjoining fields or groves to gather flowers: the other has a journey to go, sometimes through dirty roads, and at others through untrodden and difficult ways. It is this effeminacy, this immersion in sensual ideas, or craving after continual excitement, that spoils the poet for his prose-tasks. He cannot wait till the effect comes of itself, or arises out of the occasion: he must force it upon all occasions, or his spirit droops and flags under a supposed imputation of dullness. He can never drift with the current, but is always hoisting sail, and has his streamers flying. He has got a striking simile on hand; he *lugs* it in with the first opportunity, and with little connection, and so defeats his object. He has a story to tell: he tells it in the first page, and where it would come in well, has nothing to say; like Goldsmith, who having to wait upon a Noble Lord, was so full of himself and of the figure he should make, that he addressed a set speech, which he had studied for the occasion, to his Lordship's butler, and had just ended as the nobleman made his appearance. The prose ornaments of the poet are frequently beautiful in themselves, but do not assist the subject. They are pleasing excrescences—hindrances, not helps in an argument. The reason is, his embellishments in his own walk grow out of the subject by natural association; that is, beauty gives birth to kindred beauty, grandeur leads the mind on to greater grandeur. But in treating a common subject, the link is truth, force of illustration, weight of argument, not a graceful harmony in the immediate ideas; and hence the obvious and habitual clue which before guided him is gone, and he hangs on his patchwork, tinsel finery at random, in despair, without propriety and without effect. The poetical prose-writer stops to describe an object, if he admires it, or thinks it will bear to be dwelt on: the genuine prose-writer only alludes to or characterises it in passing, and with reference to his subject. The prose-writer is master of his materials: the poet is the slave of his style. Every thing showy, every thing extraneous tempts him, and he reposes idly on it: he is bent on pleasure, not on business. He aims at effect, at captivating the reader, and yet is contented with common-place ornaments, rather than none. Indeed, this last result must necessarily follow, where there is an ambition to shine, without the effort to dig for jewels in the mine of truth. The habits of a poet's mind are not those of industry or research: his images come to him, he does not go to them; and in prose-subjects, and dry matters of fact and close reasoning, the natural stimulus that at other times warms and rouses, deserts him altogether. He sees no unhallowed visions, he is inspired by no day-dreams. All is tame, literal, and barren, without the Nine. Nor does he collect his strength to strike fire from the flint by the sharpness of collision, by the eagerness of his blows. He gathers roses, he steals colours from the rainbow. He lives on nectar and ambrosia. He "treads the primrose path of dalliance," or ascends "the highest heaven of invention," or falls flat to the ground. *He is nothing, if not fanciful!*

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* I have been told, that when Sheridan was first introduced to Mr. Fox, what cemented an immediate intimacy between them was the following circumstance. Mr. Sheridan had been the night before to the House of Commons; and being asked what his impression was, said he had been principally struck with the difference of manner between Mr. Fox and Lord Stormont. The latter began by declaring in a slow, solemn, drawling, nasal tone that "when he considered the enormity and the unconstitutional tendency of the measures just proposed, he was hurried away in a torrent of passion and a whirlwind of impetuosity," pausing between every word and syllable: while the first said (speaking with the rapidity of lightning, and with breathless anxiety and impatience,) that "such was the magnitude, such the importance, such the vital interest of this question, that he could not help imploring, he could not help adjuring the House to come to it with the utmost calmness, the utmost coolness, the utmost deliberation." This trait of discrimination instantly won Mr. Fox's heart.

I shall proceed to explain these remarks, as well as I can, by a few instances in point.

It has always appeared to me that the most perfect prose-style, the most powerful, the most dazzling, the most daring, that which went the nearest to the verge of poetry, and yet never fell over, was Burke's. It has the solidity and sparkling effect of the diamond: all other *fine writing* is like French paste or Bristol-stones in the comparison. Burke's style is airy, flighty, adventurous, but it never loses sight of the subject; nay, is always in contact with, and derives its increased or varying impulse from it. It may be said to pass yawning gulfs "on the unsteadfast footing of a spear:" still it has an actual resting-place and tangible support under it—it is not suspended on nothing. It differs from poetry, as I conceive, like the chamois from the eagle: it climbs to an almost equal height, touches upon a cloud, overlooks a precipice, is picturesque, sublime—but all the while, instead of soaring through the air, it stands upon a rocky cliff, clambers up by abrupt and intricate ways, and browzes on the roughest bark, or crops the tender flower. The principle which guides his pen is truth, not beauty—not pleasure, but power. He has no choice, no selection of subject to flatter the reader's idle taste, or assist his own fancy: he must take what comes, and make the most of it. He works the most striking effects out of the most unpromising materials, by the mere activity of his mind. He rises with the lofty, descends with the mean, luxuriates in beauty, gloats over deformity. It is all the same to him, so that he loses no particle of the exact, characteristic, extreme impression of the thing he writes about, and that he communicates this to the reader, after exhausting every possible mode of illustration, plain or abstracted, figurative or literal. Whatever stamps the original image more distinctly on the mind, is welcome. The nature of his task precludes continual beauty; but it does not preclude continual ingenuity, force, originality. He had to treat of political questions, mixed modes, abstract ideas, and his fancy (or poetry, if you will) was ingrafted on these artificially, and as it might sometimes be thought, violently, instead of growing naturally out of them, as it would spring of its own accord from individual objects and feelings. There is a resistance in the *matter* to the illustration applied to it—the concrete and abstract are hardly co-ordinate; and therefore it is that, when the first difficulty is overcome, they must agree more closely in the essential qualities, in order that the coincidence may be complete. Otherwise, it is good for nothing; and you justly charge the author's style with being loose, vague, flaccid, and imbecile. The poet has been said

"To make us heirs
Of truth and pure delight in endless lays."

Not so the prose-writer, who always mingles clay with his gold, and often separates truth from mere pleasure. He can only arrive at the last through the first. In poetry, one pleasing or striking image obviously suggests another: the increasing the sense of beauty or grandeur is the principle of composition: in prose, the professed object is to impart conviction, and nothing can be admitted by way of ornament or relief, that does not add new force or clearness to the original conception. The two classes of ideas brought together by the orator or impassioned prose-writer, to wit, the general subject and the particular image, are so far incompatible, and the identity must be more strict, more marked, more determinate, to make them coalesce to any practical purpose. Every word should be a blow: every thought should instantly grapple with its fellow. There must be a weight, a precision, a conformity from association in the tropes and figures of animated prose to fit them to their place in the argument, and make them *tell*, which may be dispensed with in poetry, where there is something much more congenial between the subject matter and the illustration—

"Like beauty making beautiful old rime!"

What can be more remote, for instance, and at the same time more apposite, more *the same*, than the following comparison of the English Constitution to "the proud Keep of Windsor," in the celebrated Letter to a Noble Lord?

"Such are *their* ideas; such *their* religion, and such *their* law. But as to *our* country and *our* race, as long as the well-compacted structure of our church and state, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power—a fortress at once and a temple*—shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Sion; as long as the British monarchy—not more limited than fenced by the orders of the State—shall, like the proud Keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coeval towers; as long as this awful structure shall oversee and guard the subjected land, so long the mounds and dykes of the low, fat, Bedford level will have nothing to fear from all the pickaxes of all the levellers of France. As long as our Sovereign Lord the King, and his faithful subjects, the Lords and Commons of this realm—the triple cord which no man can break; the solemn, sworn, constitutional frank-pledge of this nation; the firm guarantees of each other's being, and each other's rights; the joint and several securities, each in its place and order, for every kind and every quality of property and of dignity,—as long as these endure, so long the Duke of Bedford is safe: and we are all safe together—the high from the blights of envy and the spoliations of rapacity; the low from the iron hand of oppression and the insolent spurn of contempt. Amen! and so be it: and so it will be,

> 'Dum domus Æneæ Capitoli immobile axum
> Accolet; imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.' "

Nothing can well be more impracticable to a simile than the vague and complicated idea which is here embodied in one; yet how finely, how nobly it stands out, in natural grandeur, in royal state, with double barriers round it to answer for its identity, with "buttress frieze and coigne of 'vantage" for the imagination to

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* "Templum in modum arcis."
TACITUS *of the Temple of Jerusalem.*

"make its pendant bed and procreant cradle," till the idea is confounded with the object representing it—the wonder of a kingdom; and then how striking, how determined the descent, "at one fell swoop," to the "low, fat, Bedford level!" Poetry would have been bound to maintain a certain decorum, a regular balance between these two ideas; sterling prose throws aside all such idle respect to appearances, and with its pen, like a sword, "sharp and sweet," lays open the naked truth! The poet's Muse is like a mistress, whom we keep only while she is young and beautiful, *durante bene placito;* the Muse of prose is like a wife, whom we take during life, *for better for worse.* Burke's execution, like that of all good prose, savours of the texture of what he describes, and his pen slides or drags over the ground of his subject, like the painter's pencil. The most rigid fidelity and the most fanciful extravagance meet, and are reconciled in his pages. I never pass Windsor but I think of this passage in Burke, and hardly know to which I am indebted most for enriching my moral sense, that or the fine picturesque stanza in Gray,

> "From Windsor's heights the expanse below
> Of mead, of lawn, of wood survey," &c.

I might mention that the so much admired description in one of the India speeches, of Hyder Ally's army (I think it is), which "now hung like a cloud upon the mountain, and now burst upon the plain like a thunderbolt," would do equally well for poetry or prose. It is a bold and striking illustration of a naturally impressive object. This is not the case with the Abbé Sieyes's far famed "pigeon-holes," nor with the comparison of the Duke of Bedford to "the Leviathan, tumbling about his unwieldy bulk in the ocean of royal bounty." Nothing here saves the description but the force of the invective; the startling truth, the vehemence, the remoteness, the aptitude, the perfect peculiarity and coincidence of the allusion. No writer would ever have thought of it but himself; no reader can ever forget it. What is there in common, one might say, between a Peer of the Realm and "that sea-beast," of those

> "Created hugest that swim the ocean-stream?"

Yet Burke has knit the two ideas together, and no man can put them asunder. No matter how slight and precarious the connection, the length of line it is necessary for the fancy to give out in keeping hold of the object on which it has fastened, he seems to have "put his hook in the nostrils" of this enormous creature of the crown, that empurples all its track through the glittering expanse of a profound and restless imagination!

In looking into the IRIS of last week, I find the following passages, in an article on the death of Lord Castlereagh:

"The splendour of majesty leaving the British metropolis, careering along the ocean, and landing in the capital of the North, is distinguished only by glimpses through the dense array of clouds in which Death hid himself, while he struck down to the dust the stateliest courtier near the throne, and the broken train of which pursues and crosses the royal progress wherever its glories are presented to the eye of imagination. . . . . . .

"The same indefatigable mind—a mind of all work—which thus ruled the Continent with a rod of iron, the sword—within the walls of the House of Commons ruled a more distracted region with a more subtle and finely tempered weapon, the tongue; and truly, if this *was* the only weapon his Lordship wielded there, where he had daily to encounter, and frequently almost alone, enemies more formidable than Bonaparte, it must be acknowledged that he achieved greater victories than Demosthenes or Cicero ever gained in far more easy fields of strife; nay, he wrought miracles of speech, outvying those miracles of song which Orpheus is said to have performed, when not only men and brutes, but rocks, woods, and mountains, followed the sound of his voice and lyre. . . . .

"But there was a worm at the root of the gourd that flourished over his head in the brightest sunshine of a court; both perished in a night, and in the morning, that which had been his glory and his shadow, covered him like a shroud; while the corpse, notwithstanding all his honours, and titles, and offices, lay unmoved in the place where it fell, till a judgment had been passed upon him which the poorest peasant escapes when he dies in the ordinary course of nature."—SHEFFIELD ADVERTISER, *August* 20, 1822.

This, it must be confessed, is very unlike Burke: yet Mr. Montgomery is a very pleasing poet, and a strenuous politician. The whole is *travelling out of the record*, and to no sort of purpose. The author is constantly getting away from the impression of his subject, to envelop himself in a cloud of images, which weaken and perplex, instead of adding force and clearness to it. Provided he is figurative, he does not care how commonplace or irrelevant the figures are, and he wanders on, delighted in a labyrinth of words, like a truant school-boy, who is only glad to have escaped from his task. He has a very slight hold of his subject, and is tempted to let it go for any fallacious ornament of style. How obscure and circuitous is the allusion to "the clouds in which Death hid himself, to strike down the stateliest courtier near the throne!" How hackneyed is the reference to Demosthenes and Cicero, and how utterly quaint and unmeaning is the ringing the changes upon Orpheus and his train of men, beasts, woods, rocks, and mountains in connection with Lord Castlereagh! But he is better pleased with this classical fable than with the death of the Noble Peer, and delights to dwell upon it, to however little use. So he is glad to take advantage of the scriptural idea of a gourd; not to enforce, but as a relief to his reflections; and points his conclusion with a puling sort of common-place, that a peasant, who dies a natural death, has no Coroner's Inquest to sit upon him. All these are the faults of the ordinary poetical style. Poets think they are bound, by the tenour of their indentures to the Muses, to "elevate and surprise" in every line; and not having the usual resources at hand in common or abstracted subjects, aspire to the end without the means. They make, or pretend, an extraordinary interest where there is none. They are ambitious, vain, and indolent—more busy in preparing idle ornaments, which they take their chance of bringing in somehow or other, than intent on eliciting truths by fair and honest inquiry. It should seem as if they considered prose as a sort of waiting maid to poetry, that could only be expected to wear her mistress's cast-off finery. Poets have been said to succeed best in fiction; and the account here given may in part explain the reason. That is to say, they must choose their own subject, in such a manner as to afford them continual opportunities of appealing to the senses and exciting the fancy. Dry details, abstruse speculations, do not give scope to vividness of description; and, as they cannot bear to be considered dull, they become too often affected, extravagant, and insipid.

I am indebted to Mr. Coleridge for the comparison of poetic prose to the second-hand finery of a lady's maid (just made use of.) He himself is an instance of his own observation, and (what is even worse) of the opposite fault—an affectation of quaintness and originality. With bits of tarnished lace and worthless frippery, he assumes a sweeping oriental costume, or borrows the stiff dresses of our ancestors, or starts an eccentric fashion of his own. He is swelling and turgid—everlastingly aiming to be greater than his subject; filling his fancy with fumes and vapours in the pangs and throes of miraculous parturition, and bringing forth only *still-births.* He has an incessant craving, as it were, to exalt every idea into a metaphor, to expand every sentiment into a lengthened mystery, voluminous and vast, confused and cloudy. His style is not succinct, but incumbered with a train of words and images that have no practical, and only a possible relation to one another—that add to its stateliness, but impede its march. One of his sentences winds its "forlorn way obscure" over the page like a patriarchal procession with camels laden, wreathed turbans, household wealth, the whole riches of the author's mind poured out upon the barren waste of his subject. The palm-tree spreads its sterile branches over-head, and the land of promise is seen in the distance. All this is owing to his wishing to overdo every thing—to make something more out of every thing than it is, or than it is worth. The simple truth does not satisfy him—no direct proposition fills up the moulds of his understanding. All is foreign, far-fetched, irrelevant, laboured, unproductive. To read one of his disquisitions is like hearing the variations to a piece of music without the score. Or, to vary the simile, he is not like a man going a journey by the stage-coach along the high-road, but is always getting into a balloon, and mounting into the air, above the plain ground of prose. Whether he soars to the empyrean, or dives to the centre (as he sometimes does,) it is equally to get away from the question before him, and to prove that he owes every thing to his own mind. His object is to invent; he scorns to imitate. The business of prose is the contrary. But Mr. Coleridge is a poet, and his thoughts are free.

I think the poet-laureat is a much better prose-writer. His style has an antique quaintness, with a modern familiarity. He has just a sufficient sprinkling of *archaisms*, of allusions to old Fuller, and Burton, and Latimer, to set off or qualify the smart flippant tone of his apologies for existing abuses, or the ready, galling virulence of his personal invectives. Mr. Southey is a faithful historian, and no inefficient partizan. In the former character, his mind is tenacious of facts; and in the latter, his spleen and jealousy prevent the "extravagant and erring spirit" of the poet from losing itself in Fancy's endless maze. He "stoops to *earth*," at least, and prostitutes his pen to some purpose (not at the same time losing his own soul, and gaining nothing by it)—and he vilifies Reform, and praises the reign of George III. in good set terms, in a straightforward, intelligible, practical, pointed way. He is not buoyed up by conscious power out of the reach of common apprehensions, but makes the most of the obvious advantages he possesses. You may complain of a pettiness and petulance of manner, but certainly there is no want of spirit or facility of execution. He does not waste powder and shot in the air, but loads his piece, takes a level aim, and hits his mark. One would say (though his Muse is ambidexter) that he wrote prose with his right hand; there is nothing awkward, circuitous, or feeble in it. "The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo:" but this would not apply to him. His prose-lucubrations are pleasanter reading than his poetry. Indeed, he is equally practised and voluminous in both; and it is not improbable conjecture, that Mr. Southey may have had some idea of rivalling the reputation of Voltaire in the extent, the spirit, and the versitality of his productions in prose and verse, except that he has written no tragedies but Wat Tyler!

To my taste, the Author of Rimini, and Editor of the Examiner, is among the best and least corrupted of our poetical prose-writers. In his light but well supported columns we find the raciness, the sharpness, and sparkling effect of poetry, with little that is extravagant or far-fetched, and no turgidity or pompous pretension. Perhaps there is too much the appearance of relaxation and trifling (as if he had escaped the shackles of rhyme,) a caprice, a levity, and a disposition to innovate in words and ideas. Still the genuine master-spirit of the prose-writer is there; the tone of lively, sensible conversation; and this may in part arise from the author's being himself an animated talker. Mr. Hunt wants something of the heat and earnestness of the political partisan; but his familiar and miscellaneous papers have all the ease, grace, and point of the best style of Essay-writing. Many of his effusions in the INDICATOR show, that if he had devoted himself exclusively to that mode of writing, he inherits more of the spirit of Steele than any man since his time.

Lord Byron's prose is bad; that is to say, heavy, laboured, and coarse: he tries to knock some one down with the butt-end of every line, which defeats his object—and the style of the Author of Waverley (if he comes fairly into this discussion) as mere style, is villanous. It is pretty plain he is a poet; for the sound of names runs mechanically in his ears, and he rings the changes unconsciously on the same words in a sentence, like the same rhymes in a couplet.

Not to spin out this discussion too much, I would conclude by observing, that some of the old English prose-writers (who were not poets) are the best, and, at the same time, the most *poetical* in the favourable sense. Among these we may reckon some of the old divines, and Jeremy Taylor at the head of them. There is a flush like the dawn over his writings; the sweetness of the rose, the freshness of the morning dew. There is a softness in his style, proceeding from the tenderness of his heart: but his head is firm, and his hand is free. His materials are as finely wrought up as they are original and attractive in themselves. Milton's prose-style savours too much of poetry, and, as I have already hinted, of an imitation of the Latin. Dryden's is perfectly unexceptionable, and a model, in simplicity, strength, and perspicuity, for the subjects he treated of

ESSAY XXV.

On the Conversation of Authors.

An author is bound to write—well or ill, wisely or foolishly: it is his trade. But I do not see that he is bound to talk, any more than he is bound to dance, or ride, or fence better than other people. Reading, study, silence, thought, are a bad introduction to loquacity. It would be sooner learnt of chambermaids and tapsters. He understands the art and mystery of his own profession, which is book-making: what right has any one to expect or require him to do more—to make a bow gracefully on entering or leaving a room, to make love charmingly, or to make a fortune at all? In all things there is a division of labour. A lord is no less amorous for writing ridiculous love-letters, nor a general less successful for wanting wit and honesty. Why then may not a poor author say nothing, and yet pass muster? Set him on the top of a stage-coach, he will make no figure; he is *mum-chance*, while the slang-wit flies about as fast as the dust, with the crack of the whip and the clatter of the horses' heels: put him in a ring of boxers, he is a poor creature—

> "And of his port as meek as is a maid."

Introduce him to a tea-party of milliner's girls, and they are ready to split their sides with laughing at him: over his bottle, he is dry: in the drawing-room rude or awkward: he is too refined for the vulgar, too clownish for the fashionable:—"he is one that cannot make a good leg, one that cannot eat a mess of broth cleanly, one that cannot ride a horse without spur-galling, one that cannot salute a woman, and look on her directly:"—in courts, in camps, in town and country, he is a cypher or a butt: he is good for nothing but a laughing-stock or a scare-crow. You can scarcely get a word out of him for love or money. He knows nothing.

He has no notion of pleasure or business, or of what is going on in the world; he does not understand cookery (unless he is a doctor in divinity,) nor surgery, nor chemistry (unless he is a *Quidnunc*,) nor mechanics, nor husbandry and tillage (unless he is as great an admirer of Tull's Husbandry, and has profited as much by it as the philosopher of Botley)—no, nor music, painting, the drama, nor the fine arts in general.

"What the deuce is it then, my good sir, that he does understand, or know any thing about?"

"BOOKS, VENUS, BOOKS!"

"What books!"

"Not receipt-books, Madona, nor account-books, nor books of pharmacy, or the veterinary art (they belong to their respective callings and handicrafts,) but books of liberal taste and general knowledge."

"What do you mean by that general knowledge which implies not a knowledge of things in general, but an ignorance (by your own account) of every one in particular: or by that liberal taste which scorns the pursuits and acquirements of the rest of the world in succession, and is confined exclusively, and by way of excellence, to what nobody takes an interest in but yourself, and a few idlers like yourself? Is this what the critics mean by the *belles-lettres*, and the study of humanity?"

Book-knowledge, in a word, then, is knowledge *communicable by books;* and it is general and liberal for this reason, that it is intelligible and interesting on the bare suggestion. That to which any one feels a romantic attachment, merely from finding it in a book, must be interesting in itself: that which he instantly forms a lively and entire conception of, from seeing a few marks and scratches upon paper, must be taken from common nature: that which, the first time you meet with it, seizes upon the attention as a curious speculation, must exercise the general faculties of the human mind. There are certain broader aspects of society and views of things common to every subject, and more or less cognizable to every mind; and these the scholar treats, and founds his claim to general attention upon them, without being chargeable with pedantry. The minute descriptions of fishing-tackle, of baits and flies, in Walton's Complete Angler, make that work a great favourite with sportsmen: the alloy of an amiable humanity, and the modest but touching descriptions of familiar incidents and rural objects scattered through it, have made it an equal favourite with every reader of taste and feeling. Montaigne's Essays, Dilworth's Spelling Book, and Fearn's Treatise on Contingent Remainders, are all equally books, but not equally adapted for all classes of readers. The two last are of no use but to school-masters and lawyers: but the first is a work we may recommend to any one to read who has ever thought at all, or who would learn to think justly on any subject. Persons of different trades and professions—the mechanic, the shop-keeper, the medical practitioner, the artist, &c., may all have great knowledge and ingenuity in their several vocations, the details of which will be very edifying to themselves, and just as incomprehensible to their neighbours: but over and above this professional and technical knowledge, they must be supposed to have a stock of common sense and common feeling to furnish subjects for common conversation, or to give them any pleasure in each other's company. It is to this common stock of ideas, spread over the surface, or striking its roots into the very centre of society, that the popular writer appeals, and not in vain; for he finds readers. It is of this finer essence of wisdom and humanity, "ethereal mould, sky-tinctured," that books of the better sort are made. They contain the language of thought. It must happen that, in the course of time and the variety of human capacity, some persons will have struck out finer observations, reflections, and sentiments than others. These they have committed to books of memory, have bequeathed as a lasting legacy to posterity; and such persons have become standard authors. We visit at the shrine, drink in some measure of the inspiration, and cannot easily "breathe in other air less pure, accustomed to immortal fruits." Are we to be blamed for this, because the vulgar and illiterate do not always understand us? The fault is rather in them, who are "confined and cabin'd in," each in their own particular sphere and compartment of ideas, and have not the same refined medium of communication or abstracted topics of discourse. Bring a number of literary or of illiterate persons together perfect strangers to each other, and see which party will make the best company. "Verily, we have our reward." We have made our election, and have no reason to repent it, if we were wise. But the misfortune is, we wish to have all the advantages on one side. We grudge, and cannot reconcile it to ourselves, that any one "should go about to cozen fortune, without the stamp of learning!" We think "because we are *scholars*, there shall be no more cakes and ale!" We don't know how to account for it, that bar-maids should gossip, or ladies whisper, or bullies roar, or fools laugh, or knaves thrive, without having gone through the same course of select study that we have! This vanity is preposterous, and carries its own punishment with it. Books are a world in themselves, it is true; but they are not the only world The world itself is a volume larger than all the libraries in it. Learning is a sacred deposit from the experience of ages; but it has not put all future experience on the shelf, or debarred the common herd of mankind from the use of their hands, tongues, eyes, ears, or understandings. Taste is a luxury for the privileged few: but it would be hard upon those who have not the same standard of refinement in their own minds that we suppose ourselves to have, if this should prevent them from having recourse, as usual, to their old frolics, coarse jokes, and horse-play and getting through the wear and tear of the world, with such homely sayings and shrewd helps as they may. Happy is it, that the mass of mankind eat and drink, and sleep, and perform their several tasks, and do as they like without us—caring nothing for our scribblings, our carpings, and our quibbles; and moving on the same, in spite of our fine-spun distinctions, fantastic theories, and lines of demarcation, which are like the chalk-figures drawn on ball-room floors to be danced out before morning! In the field opposite the window where I write this, there is a country-girl picking stones: in the one next it, there are several poor women weeding the blue and red flowers from the corn: farther on, are two boys, tending a flock of sheep. What do they know or care about what I am writing about them, or ever will—or what would they be the better for it, if they did? Or why need we despise

"The wretched slave,
Who like a lackey, from the rise to the set,
Sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and all night

Sleeps in Elysium; next day, after dawn,
Doth rise, and help Hyperion to his horse;
And follows so the ever-running year
With profitable labour to his grave?"

Is not this life as sweet as writing Ephemerides? But we put that which flutters the brain idly for a moment, and then is heard no more, in competition with nature, which exists everywhere, and lasts always. We not only underrate the force of nature, and make too much of art—but we also overrate our own accomplishments and advantages derived from art. In the presence of clownish ignorance, or of persons without any great pretensions, real or affected, we are very much inclined to take upon ourselves, as the virtual representatives of science, art, and literature. We have a strong itch to show off and do the honours of civilization for all the great men whose works we have ever read, and whose names our auditors have never heard of, as noblemen's lacqueys, in the absence of their masters, give themselves airs of superiority over every one else.—But though we have read Congreve, a stage coachman may be an over-match for us in wit: though we are deep-versed in the excellence of Shakespear's colloquial style, a village beldam may outscold us: though we have read Machiavel in the original Italian, we may be easily outwitted by a clown: and though we have cried our eyes out over the New Eloise, a poor shepherd-lad, who hardly knows how to spell his own name, may "tell his tale, under the hawthorn in the dale," and prove a more thriving wooer. What then is the advantage we possess over the meanest of the mean? Why this, that we have read Congreve, Shakespear, Machiavel, the New Eloise;—not that we are to have their wit, genius, shrewdness, or melting tenderness.

From speculative pursuits we must be satisfied with speculative benefits. From reading, too, we learn to write. If we have had the pleasure of studying the highest models of perfection in their kind, and can hope to leave any thing ourselves, however slight, to be looked upon as a model, or even a good copy in its way, we may think ourselves pretty well off, without engrossing all the privileges of learning, and all the blessings of ignorance into the bargain.

It has been made a question whether there have not been individuals in common life of greater talents and powers of mind than the most celebrated writers—whether, for instance, such or such a Liverpool merchant, or Manchester manufacturer, was not a more sensible man than Montaigne, of a longer reach of understanding than the Viscount of St. Albans. There is no saying, unless some of these illustrious obscure had communicated their important discoveries to the world. But then they would have been authors !—On the other hand, there is a set of critics who fall into the contrary error ; and suppose that unless the proof of capacity is laid before all the world, the capacity itself cannot exist ; looking upon all those who have not commenced authors, as literally " stocks and stones, and worse than senseless things." I remember trying to convince a person of this class that a young lady, whom he knew something of, the niece of a celebrated authoress, had just the same sort of fine *tact* and ironical turn in conversation, that her relative had shown in her writings when young. The only answer I could get was an incredulous smile, and the observation that when she wrote any thing as good as ——, or ——, he might think her as clever. I said all I meant was, that she had the same family talents, and asked whether he thought that if Miss —— had not been very clever, as a mere girl, before she wrote her novels, she would ever have written them ? It was all in vain. He still stuck to his text, and was convinced that the niece was a little fool compared to her aunt at the same age ; and if he had known the aunt formerly, he would have had just the same opinion of *her*. My friend was one of those who have a settled persuasion that it is the book that makes the author, and not the author the book. That's a strange opinion for a great philosopher to hold. But he wilfully shuts his eyes to the germs and indistinct workings of genius, and treats them with supercilious indifference, till they stare him in the face through the press ; and then takes cognizance only of the overt acts and published evidence. This is neither a proof of wisdom, nor the way to be wise. It is partly pedantry and prejudice, and partly feebleness of judgment and want of magnanimity. He dare as little commit himself on the character of books, as of individuals, till they are stamped by the public.

If you show him any work for his approbation, he asks, "Whose is the superscription?"—He judges of genius by its shadow, reputation—of the metal by the coin. He is just the reverse of another person whom I know—for, as G—— never allows a particle of merit to any one till it is acknowledged by the whole world, C—— withholds his tribute of applause from every person, in whom any mortal but himself can descry the least glimpse of understanding. He would be thought to look farther into a millstone than any body else. He would have others see with his eyes, and take their opinions from him on trust, in spite of their senses. The more obscure and defective the indications of merit, the greater his sagacity and candour in being the first to point them out. He looks upon what he nicknames *a man of genius*, but as the breath of his nostrils, and the clay in the potter's hands. If any such inert, unconscious mass, under the fostering care of the modern Prometheus, is kindled into life,—begins to see, speak, and move, so as to attract the notice of other people,—our jealous patroniser of latent worth in that case throws aside, scorns, and hates his own handiwork; and deserts his intellectual offspring from the moment they can go alone and shift for themselves.—But to pass on to our more immediate subject.

The conversation of authors is not so good as might be imagined: but, such as it is (and with rare exceptions) it is better than any other. The proof of which is, that, when you are used to it, you cannot put up with any other. That of mixed company becomes utterly intolerable—you cannot sit out a common tea and card party, at least, if they pretend to talk at all. You are obliged in despair to cut all your old acquaintance who are not *au fait* on the prevailing and most smartly contested topics, who are not imbued with the high gusto of criticism and *virtu*. You cannot bear to hear a friend whom you have not seen for many years, tell at how much a yard he sells his laces and tapes, when he means to move into his next house, when he heard last from his relations in the country, whether trade is alive or dead, or whether Mr. Such-a-one gets to look old. This sort of neighbourly gossip will not go down after the high-raised tone of literary conversation. The last may be very absurd, very unsatisfactory, and full of turbulence and heart-burnings;

but it has a zest in it which more ordinary topics of news or family-affairs do not supply. Neither will the conversation of what we understand by *gentlemen* and men of fashion, do after that of men of letters. It is flat, insipid, stale, and unprofitable in the comparison. They talk about much the same things, pictures, poetry, politics, plays; but they do it worse, and at a sort of vapid secondhand. They, in fact, talk out of newspapers and magazines, what *we write there*. They do not feel the same interest in the subjects they affect to handle with an air of fashionable condescension, nor have they the same knowledge of them, if they were ever so much in earnest in displaying it. If it were not for the wine and the dessert, no author in his senses would accept an invitation to a well-dressed dinner-party, except out of pure good-nature and unwillingness to disoblige by his refusal. Persons in high-life talk almost entirely by rote. There are certain established modes of address, and certain answers to them expected as a matter of course, as a point of etiquette. The studied forms of politeness do not give the greatest possible scope to an exuberance of wit or fancy. The fear of giving offence destroys sincerity, and without sincerity there can be no true enjoyment of society, nor unfettered exertion of intellectual activity. Those who have been accustomed to live with the great are hardly considered as conversible persons in literary society. They are not to be talked with, any more than puppets or echos. They have no opinions but what will please; and you naturally turn away, as a waste of time and words, from attending to a person who just before assented to what you said, and whom you find, the moment after, from something that unexpectedly or perhaps by design drops from him, to be of a totally different way of thinking. This *bush-fighting* is not regarded as fair play among scientific men. As fashionable conversation is a sacrifice to politeness, so the conversation of low-life is nothing but rudeness. They contradict you without giving a reason, or if they do, it is a very bad one—swear, talk loud, repeat the same thing fifty times over, get to calling names, and from words proceed to blows. You cannot make companions of servants, or persons in an inferior station in life. You may talk to them on matters of business, and what they have to do for you (as lords talk to bruisers on subjects of *fancy*, or country-squires to their grooms on horse-racing,) but out of that narrow sphere, to any general topic, you cannot lead them; the conversation soon flags, and you go back to the old question, or are obliged to break up the sitting for want of ideas in common. The conversation of authors is better than that of most professions. It is better than that of lawyers, who talk nothing but *double entendre*—than that of physicians, who talk of the approaching deaths of the College, or the marriage of some new practitioner with some rich widow—than that of divines, who talk of the last place they dined at—than that of University-men, who make stale puns, repeat the refuse of the London newspapers, and affect an ignorance of Greek and mathematics —it is better than that of players, who talk of nothing but the green-room, and rehearse the scholar, the wit, or the fine gentleman, like a part on the stage—or than that of ladies, who, whatever you talk of, think of nothing, and expect you to think of nothing, but themselves. It is not easy to keep up a conversation with women in company. It is thought a piece of rudeness to differ from them: it is not quite fair to ask them a reason for what they say. You are afraid of pressing too hard upon them: but where you cannot differ openly and unreservedly, you cannot heartily agree. It is not so in France. There the women talk of things in general, and reason better than the men in this country. They are mistresses of the intellectual foils. They are adepts in all the topics. They know what is to be said for and against all sorts of questions, and are lively and full of mischief into the bargain. They are very subtle. They put you to your trumps immediately. Your logic is more in requisition even than your gallantry. You must argue as well as bow yourself into the good graces of these modern Amazons. What a situation for an Englishman to be placed in!*

The fault of literary conversation in general is its too great tenaciousness It fastens upon a subject, and will not let it go. It resembles a battle rather than a skirmish, and makes a toil of a pleasure. Perhaps it does this from necessity, from a consciousness of wanting the more familiar graces, the power to sport and trifle, to touch lightly and adorn agreeably, every view or turn of a question *en passant*, as it arises. Those who have a reputation to lose are too ambitious of shining, to please. "To excel in conversation," said an ingenious man, "one must not be always striving to say good things: to say one good thing, one must say many bad, and more indifferent ones." This desire to shine without the means at hand, often makes men silent:—

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* The topics of metaphysical argument having got into female society in France, is a proof how much they must have been discussed there generally, and how unfounded the charge is which we bring against them of excessive thoughtlessness and frivolity. The French (taken all together) are a more sensible, reflecting, and better informed people than the English.

"The fear of being silent strikes us dumb."

A writer who has been accustomed to take a connected view of a difficult question, and to work it out gradually in all its bearings, may be very deficient in that quickness and ease which men of the world, who are in the habit of hearing a variety of opinions, who pick up an observation on one subject, and another on another, and who care about none any farther than the passing away of an idle hour, usually acquire. An author has studied a particular point—he has read, he has inquired, he has thought a great deal upon it: he is not contented to take it up casually in common with others, to throw out a hint, to propose an objection: he will either remain silent, uneasy, and dissatisfied, or he will begin at the beginning and go through with it to the end. He is for taking the whole responsibility upon himself. He would be thought to understand the subject better than others, or indeed would show that nobody else knows any thing about it. There are always three or four points on which the literary novice at his first outset in life fancies he can enlighten every company, and bear down all opposition: but he is cured of this Quixotic and pugnacious spirit, as he goes more into the world, where he finds that there are other opinions and other pretensions to be adjusted besides his own. When this asperity wears off, and a certain scholastic precocity is mellowed down, the conversation of men of letters becomes both interesting and instructive. Men of the world have no fixed principles, no ground-work of thought: mere scholars have too much an object, a theory always in view, to which they wrest every thing, and not unfrequently, common sense itself. By mixing with society, they rub off their hardness of manner, and impracticable, offensive singularity, while they retain a greater depth and coherence of understanding. There is more to be learnt from them than from their books. This was a remark of Rousseau's, and it is a very true one. In the confidence and unreserve of private intercourse, they are more at liberty to say what they think, to put the subject in different and opposite points of view, to illustrate it more briefly and pithily by familiar expressions, by an appeal to individual character and personal knowledge—to bring in the limitation, to obviate misconception, to state difficulties on their own side of the argument, and answer them as well as they can. This would hardly agree with the prudery, and somewhat ostentatious claims of authorship. Dr. Johnson's conversation in Boswell's Life is much better than his published works: and the fragments of the opinions of celebrated men, preserved in their letters or in anecdotes of them, are justly sought after as invaluable for the same reason. For instance, what a fund of sense there is in Grimm's Memoirs! We thus get at the essence of what is contained in their more laboured productions, without the affectation or formality.—Argument, again, is the death of conversation, if carried on in a spirit of hostility: but discussion is a pleasant and profitable thing, where you advance and defend your opinions as far as you can, and admit the truth of what is objected against them with equal impartiality; in short, where you do not pretend to set up for an oracle, but freely declare what you really know about any question, or suggest what has struck you as throwing a new light upon it, and let it pass for what it is worth. This tone of conversation was well described by Dr. Johnson, when he said of some party at which he had been present the night before—"We had good talk, sir!" As a general rule, there is no conversation worth any thing but between friends, or those who agree in the same leading views of a subject. Nothing was ever learnt by either side in a dispute. You contradict one another, will not allow a grain of sense in what your adversary advances, are blind to whatever makes against yourself, dare not look the question fairly in the face, so that you cannot avail yourself even of your real advantages, insist most on what you feel to be the weakest points of your argument, and get more and more absurd, dogmatical, and violent every moment. Disputes for victory generally end to the dissatisfaction of all parties; and the one recorded in Gil Blas breaks up just as it ought. I once knew a very ingenious man, than whom, to take him in the way of common chit-chat or fireside gossip, no one could be more entertaining or rational. He would make an apt classical quotation, propose an explanation of a curious passage in Shakespear's Venus and Adonis, detect a metaphysical error in Locke, would infer the volatility of the French character from the chapter in Sterne where the Count mistakes the feigned name of Yorick for a proof of his being the identical imaginary character in Hamlet (*Et vous êtes Yorick!*)—thus confounding words with things twice over—but let a difference of opinion be once hitched in, and it was all over with him. His only object from that time was to shut out common sense, and to be proof against conviction. He would argue the most ridiculous point (such as that there were two original languages) for hours together, nay, through the horologe. You would not suppose it was the same person. He was like an obstinate run-away horse, that takes the bit in his mouth, and becomes mischievous and unmanageable. He had made up his mind to one thing, not to admit a single particle of what any one else said for or against him. It was all the difference between a man drunk or sober, sane or mad. It is the same when he once gets the pen in his hand. He has been trying to prove a contradiction in terms for the ten last years of his life, viz. that the Bourbons have the same right to the throne of France that the Brunswick family have to the throne of England. Many people think there is a want of honesty or want of understanding in this. There is neither. But he will persist in an argument to the last pinch; he will yield, in absurdity, to no man!

This litigious humour is bad enough: but there is one character still worse, that of a person who goes into company, not to contradict, but to *talk at* you. This is the greatest nuisance in civilized society. Such a person does not come armed to defend himself at all points, but to unsettle, if he can, and throw a slur on all your favourite opinions. If he has a notion that any one in the room is fond of poetry, he immediately volunteers a contemptuous tirade against the idle jingle of verse. If he suspects you have a delight in pictures, he endeavours, not by fair argument, but by a side-wind, to put you out of conceit with so frivolous an art. If you have a taste for music, he does not think much good is to be done by this tickling of the ears. If you speak in praise of a comedy, he does not see the use of wit: if you say you have been to a tragedy, he shakes his head at this mockery of human misery, and thinks it ought to be prohibited. He tries to find out beforehand whatever it is that you take a particular pride or pleasure in, that he may annoy your self-love in the tenderest point (as if he were probing a wound) and make you dissatisfied with yourself and your pursuits for several days afterwards. A person might as well make a practice of throwing out scandalous aspersions against your dearest friends or nearest relations, by way of ingratiating himself into your favour. Such ill-timed pertinence is "villainous, and shows a pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it."

The soul of conversation is sympathy.—Authors should converse chiefly with authors, and their talk should be of books. "When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war." There is nothing so pedantic as pretending not to be pedantic. No man can get above his pursuit in life: it is getting above himself, which is impossible. There is a Free-masonry in all things. You can only speak to be understood, but this you cannot be, except by those who are in the secret. Hence an argument has been drawn to supersede the necessity of conversation altogether; for it has been said, that there is no use in talking to people of sense, who know all that you can tell them, nor to fools, who will not be instructed. There is, however, the smallest encouragement to proceed, when you are conscious that the more you really enter into a subject, the farther you will be from the comprehension of your hearers—and that the more proofs you give of any position, the more odd and out-of-the-way they will think your notions. Coleridge is the only person who can talk to all sorts of people, on all sorts of subjects, without caring a farthing for their understanding one word he says—and *he* talks only for admiration and to be listened to, and accordingly the least interruption puts him out. I firmly believe he would make just the same impression on half his audiences, if he purposely repeated absolute nonsense with the same voice and manner and inexhaustible flow of undulating speech! In general, wit shines only by reflection. You must take your cue from your company—must rise as they rise, and sink as they fall. You must see that your good things, your knowing allusions, are not flung away, like the pearls in the adage. What a check it is to be asked a foolish question; to find that the first principles are not understood! You are thrown on your back immediately, the conversation is stopped like a country-dance by those who do not know the figure. But when a set of adepts, of *illuminati*, get about a question, it is worth while to hear them talk. They may snarl and quarrel over it, like dogs; but they pick it bare to the bone, they masticate it thoroughly.

ESSAY XXVI.

The same subject continued.

This was the case formerly at L——'s, where we used to have many lively skirmishes at their Thursday evening parties. I doubt whether the Small-coal man's musical parties could exceed them. Oh! for the pen of John Buncle to consecrate a *petit souvenir* to their memory! There was L—— himself, the most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men. He always made the best pun, and the best remark in the course of the evening. His serious conversation, like his serious writing, is his best. No one ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half a dozen half-sentences as he does. His jests scald like tears: and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen, laughing, hair-brained vein of home-felt truth! What choice venom! How often did we cut into the haunch of letters, while we discussed the haunch of mutton on the table! How we skimmed the cream of criticism! How we got into the heart of controversy! How we picked out the marrow of authors! "And, in our flowing cups, many a good name and true was freshly remembered." Recollect (most sage and critical reader) that in all this I was but a guest! Need I go over the names? They were but the old everlasting set—Milton and Shakespear, Pope and Dryden, Steele and Addison, Swift and Gay, Fielding, Smollet, Sterne, Richardson, Hogarth's prints, Claude's landscapes, the Cartoons at Hampton-court, and all those things, that, having once been, must ever be. The Scotch Novels had not then been heard of: so we said nothing about them.. In general, we were hard upon the moderns. The author of the Rambler was only tolerated in Boswell's Life of him; and it was as much as any one could do to edge in a word for Junius. L—— could not bear Gil Blas.

This was a fault. I remember the greatest triumph I ever had was in persuading him, after some years' difficulty, that Fielding was better than Smollet. On one occasion, he was for making out a list of persons famous in history that one would wish to see again—at the head of whom were Pontius Pilate, Sir Thomas Browne, and Dr. Faustus—but we black-balled most of his list! But with what a gusto would he describe his favourite authors, Donne, or Sir Philip Sidney, and call their most crabbed passages *delicious!* He tried them on his palate as epicures taste olives, and his observations had a smack in them, like a roughness on the tongue. With what discrimination he hinted a defect in what he admired most—as in saying that the display of the sumptuous banquet in Paradise Regained was not in true keeping, as the simplest fare was all that was necessary to tempt the extremity of hunger—and stating that Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost were too much like married people. He has furnished many a text for C—— to preach upon. There was no fuss or cant about him: nor were his sweets or his sours ever diluted with one particle of affectation. I cannot say that the party at L——'s were all of one description. There were honorary members, lay-brothers. Wit and good-fellowship was the motto inscribed over the door. When a stranger came in, it was not asked, "Has he written any thing?"—we were above that pedantry; but we waited to see what he could do. If he could take a hand at piquet, he was welcome to sit down. If a person liked any thing, if he took snuff heartily, it was sufficient. He would understand, by analogy, the pungency of other things, besides Irish blackguard, or Scotch rappee. A character was good any-where, in a room or on paper. But we abhorred insipidity, affectation, and fine gentlemen. There was one of our party who never failed to mark "two for his Nob" at cribbage, and he was thought no mean person. This was Ned P——, and a better fellow in his way breathes not. There was ——, who asserted some incredible matter-of-fact as a likely paradox, and settled all controversies by an *ipse dixit*, a *fiat* of his will, hammering out many a hard theory on the anvil of his brain—the Baron Munchausen of politics and practical philosophy:—there was Captain ——, who had you at an advantage by never understanding you :—there was Jem White, the author of Falstaff's Letters, who the other day left this dull world to go in search of more kindred spirits, "turning like the latter end of a lover's lute :"—there was A——, who sometimes dropped in, the Will Honeycomb of our set—and Mrs. R——, who being of a quiet turn, loved to hear a noisy debate. An utterly uninformed person might have supposed this a scene of vulgar confusion and uproar. While the most critical question was pending, while the most difficult problem in philosophy was solving, P—— cried out, "That's game," and M. B. muttered a quotation over the last remains of a veal-pie at a side-table. Once, and once only, the literary interest overcame the general. For C—— was riding the high German horse, and demonstrating the Categories of the Transcendental philosophy to the author of the Road to Ruin; who insisted on his knowledge of German, and German metaphysics, having read the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the original. "My dear Mr. Holcroft," said C——, in a tone of infinitely provoking conciliation, "you really put me in mind of a sweet pretty German girl, about fifteen, that I met with in the Hartz forest in Germany—and who one day, as I was reading the Limits of the Knowable and the Unknowable, the profoundest of all his works, with great attention, came behind my chair, and leaning over, said, 'What, *you* read Kant? Why, *I* that am a German born, don't understand him!'" This was too much to bear, and Holcrcft, starting up, called out in no measured tone, "Mr. C——, you are the most eloquent man I ever met with, and the most troublesome with your eloquence!" P—— held the cribbage-peg that was to mark him game, suspended in his hand; and the whist table was silent for a moment. I saw Holcroft down-stairs, and, on coming to the landing place in Mitre-court, he stopped me to observe, that "he thought Mr. C—— a very clever man, with a great command of language, but that he feared he did not always affix very precise ideas to the words he used." After he was gone, we had our laugh out, and went on with the argument on the nature of Reason, the Imagination, and the Will. I wish I could find a publisher for it . it would make a supplement to the *Biographia Literaria* in a volume and a half octavo.

Those days are over! An event, the name of which I wish never to mention, broke up our party, like a bomb-shell thrown into the room: and now we seldom meet——

> "Like angels' visits, short and far between."

There is no longer the same set of persons, nor of associations. L—— does not live where he did. By shifting his abode, his notions seem less fixed. He does not wear his old snuff-coloured coat and breeches. It looks like an alteration in his style. An author and a wit should have a separate costume, a particular cloth: he should present something positive and singular to the mind, like Mr. Douce of the Museum. Our faith in the religion of letters will not bear to be taken to pieces, and put together again by caprice or accident. Leigh Hunt goes there sometimes. He has a fine vinous spirit about him, and tropical blood in his veins: but he is better at his own table. He has a great flow of pleasantry and delightful animal spirits: but his hits do not tell like L——'s; you cannot repeat them the next day. He requires not only to be appreciated, but to have a select circle of admirers and devotees, to feel himself quite at home. He sits at the head of a party with great gaiety and grace; has an elegant manner and turn of features; is never at a loss—*aliquando sufflaminandus erat*—has continual sportive sallies of wit or fancy; tells a story capitally; mimics an actor, or an acquaintance, to admiration; laughs with great glee and good humour at his own or other people's jokes; understands the point of an equivoque, or an observation immediately; has a taste and knowledge of books, of music, of medals; manages an argument adroitly; is genteel and gallant, and has a set of bye-phrases and quaint allusions always at hand to produce a laugh:—if he has a fault, it is that he does not listen so well as he speaks, is impatient of interruption, and is fond of being looked up to, without considering by whom. I believe, however, he has pretty well seen the folly of this. Neither is his ready display of personal accomplishment and variety of resources an advantage to his writings. They sometimes present a desultory and slip-shod appearance, owing to this very circumstance. The same things that tell, perhaps, best, to a private circle round the fireside, are not always intelligible to the public, nor does he take pains to make them so. He is too confident and secure of his audience. That which may be entertaining enough with the assistance of a certain liveliness of manner, may read very flat on paper, because it is abstracted from all the circumstances that had set it off to advantage. A writer should recollect that he has only to trust to the immediate impression of words, like a musician who sings without the accompaniment of an instrument. There is nothing to help out, or slubber over, the defects of the voice in the one case, nor of the style in the other. The reader may, if he pleases, get a very good idea of Leigh Hunt's conversation from a very agreeable paper he has lately published, called the *Indicator*, than which nothing can be more happily conceived or executed.

The art of conversation is the art of hearing as well as of being heard. Authors in general are not good listeners. Some of the best talkers are, on this account, the worst company; and some who are very indifferent, but very great talkers, are as bad. It is sometimes wonderful to see how a person, who has been entertaining or tiring a company by the hour together, drops his countenance as if he had been shot, or had been seized with a sudden lock-jaw, the moment any one interposes a single observation. The best converser I know is, however, the best listener. I mean Mr. Northcote, the painter. Painters by their profession are not bound to shine in conversation, and they shine the more. He lends his ear to an observation, as if you had brought him a piece of news, and enters into it with as much avidity and earnestness, as if it interested himself personally. If he repeats an old remark or story, it is with the same freshness and point as for the first time. It always arises out of the occasion, and has the stamp of originality. There is no parroting of himself. His look is a continual, ever-varying history-piece of what passes in his mind. His face is as a book. There need no marks of interjection or interrogation to what he says. His manner is quite picturesque. There is an excess of character and *naiveté* that never tires. His thoughts bubble up and sparkle, like beads on old wine. The fund of anecdote, the collection of curious particulars, is enough to set up any common retailer of jests, that dines out every day; but these are not strung together like a row of galley-slaves, but are always introduced to illustrate some argument or bring out some fine distinction of character. The mixture of spleen adds to the sharpness of the point, like poisoned arrows. Mr. Northcote enlarges with enthusiasm on the old painters, and tells good things of the new. The only thing he ever vexed me in was his liking the *Catalogue Raisonnée*. I had almost as soon hear him talk of Titian's pictures (which he does with tears in his eyes, and looking just like them) as see the originals, and I had rather hear him talk of Sir Joshua's than see them. He is the last of that school who knew Goldsmith and Johnson. How finely he describes Pope! His elegance of mind, his figure, his character, were not unlike his own. He does not resemble a modern Englishman, but puts one in mind of a Roman Cardinal or Spanish Inquisitor. I never ate or drank with Mr. Northcote; but I have lived on his conversation with undiminished relish ever since I can remember,—and when I leave it, I come out into the street with feelings lighter and more ethereal than I have at any other time.—One of his *tête-à-têtes* would at any time make an Essay; but he cannot write himself, because he loses himself in the connecting passages, is fearful of the effect, and wants the habit of bringing his ideas into one focus or point of view. A *lens* is necessary to collect the diverging rays, the refracted and broken angular lights of conversation on paper. Contradiction is half the battle in talking—the being startled by what others say, and having to answer on the spot. You have to defend yourself, paragraph by paragraph, parenthesis within parenthesis. Perhaps it might be supposed that a person who excels in conversation and cannot write, would succeed better in dialogue. But the stimulus, the immediate irritation, would be wanting; and the work would read flatter than ever, from not having the very thing it pretended to have.

Lively sallies and connected discourse are very different things. There are many persons of that impatient and restless turn of mind, that they cannot wait a moment for a conclusion, or follow up the thread of any argument. In the hurry of conversation their ideas are somehow huddled into sense; but in the intervals of thought, leave a great gap between. Montesquieu said, he often lost an idea before he could find words for it: yet he dictated, by way of saving time, to an amanuensis. This last is, in my opinion, a vile method, and a solecism in authorship. Horne Tooke, among other paradoxes, used to maintain, that no one could write a good style who was not in the habit of talking and hearing the sound of his own voice. He might as well have said that no one could relish a good style without reading it aloud, as we find common people do to assist their apprehension. But there is a method of trying periods on the ear, or weighing them with the scales of the breath, without any articulate sound. Authors, as they write, may be said to "hear a sound so fine, there's nothing lives 'twixt it and silence." Even musicians generally compose in their heads. I agree that no style is good, that is not fit to be spoken or read aloud with effect. This holds true not only of emphasis and cadence, but also with regard to natural idiom and colloquial freedom. Sterne's was in this respect the best style that ever was written. You fancy that you hear the people talking. For a contrary reason, no college-man writes a good style, or understands it when written. Fine writing is with him all verbiage and monotony—a translation into classical centos or hexameter lines.

That which I have just mentioned is among many instances I could give of ingenious absurdities advanced by Mr. Tooke in the heat and pride of controversy. A person who knew him well, and greatly admired his talents, said of him that he never (to his recollection) heard him defend an opinion which he thought right, or in which he believed him to be himself sincere. He indeed provoked his antagonists into the toils by the very extravagance of his assertions, and the teasing sophistry by which he rendered them plausible. His temper was prompter to his skill. He had the manners of a man of the world, with great scholastic resources. He flung every one else off his guard, and was himself immoveable. I never knew any one who did not admit his superiority in this kind of warfare. He put a full stop to one of C——'s long-winded prefatory apologies for his youth and inexperience, by saying abruptly, "Speak up, young man!" and, at another time, silenced a learned professor, by desiring an explanation of a word which the other frequently used, and which, he said, he had been many years trying to get at the meaning of,—

the copulative Is! He was the best intellectual fencer of his day. He made strange havoc of Fuseli's fantastic hieroglyphics, violent humours, and oddity of dialect. Curran, who was sometimes of the same party, was lively and animated in convivial conversation, but dull in argument; nay, averse to any thing like reasoning or serious observation, and had the worst taste I ever knew. His favourite critical topics were to abuse Milton's Paradise Lost, and Romeo and Juliet. Indeed, he confessed a want of sufficient acquaintance with books when he found himself in literary society in London. He and Sheridan once dined at John Kemble's with Mrs. Inchbald and Mary Woolstonecroft, when the discourse almost wholly turned on Love, "from noon to dewy eve, a summer's day!" What a subject! What speakers, and what hearers! What would I not give to have been there, had I not learned it all from the bright eyes of Amaryllis, and may one day make a *Table-talk* of it! Peter Pindar was rich in anecdote and grotesque humour, and profound in technical knowledge both of music, poetry, and painting, but he was gross and over-bearing. Wordsworth sometimes talks like a man inspired on subjects of poetry (his own out of the question)—Coleridge well on every subject, and G—dwin on none. To finish this subject: Mrs. M——'s conversation is as finecut as her features, and I like to sit in the room with that sort of coronet face. What she says leaves a flavour, like fine green tea. H—t's is like champaigne, and N——'s like anchovy sandwiches. H—yd—n's is like a game at trap-ball: L—'s like snap-dragon: and my own (if I do not mistake the matter) is not very much unlike a game at nine-pins! . . . . . . One source of the conversation of authors, is the character of other authors, and on that they are rich indeed. What things they say! What stories they tell of one another, more particularly of their friends! If I durst only give some of these confidential communications! . . . The reader may perhaps think the foregoing a specimen of them:—but indeed he is mistaken.

I do not know of any greater impertinence, than for an obscure individual to set about pumping a character of celebrity. "Bring him to me," said a Doctor Tronchin, speaking of Rousseau, "that I may see whether he has any thing in him." Before you can take measure of the capacity of others, you ought to be sure that they have not taken measure of yours. They may think you a spy on them, and may not like their company. If you really want to know whether another person can talk well, begin by saying a good thing yourself, and you will have a right to look for a rejoinder. "The best tennis-players," says Sir Fopling Flutter, "make the best matches."

> ———————— For wit is like a rest
> Held up at tennis, which men do the best
> With the best players.

We hear it often said of a great author, or a great actress, that they are very stupid people in private. But he was a fool that said so. *Tell me your company, and I'll tell you your manners.* In conversation, as in other things, the action and reaction should bear a certain proportion to each other. Authors may, in some sense, be looked upon as foreigners, who are not naturalized even in their native soil. L—— once came down into the country to see us. He was "like the most capricious poet Ovid among the Goths." The country-people thought him an oddity, and did not understand his jokes. It would be strange if they had; for he did not make any, while he staid. But when we crossed the country to Oxford, then he spoke a little. He and the old colleges were hail-fellow well met; and in the quadrangles, he "walked gowned."

There is a character of a gentleman; so there is a character of a scholar, which is no less easily recognized. The one has an air of books about him, as the other has of good-breeding. The one wears his thoughts as the other does his clothes, gracefully; and even if they are a little old-fashioned, they are not ridiculous: they have had their day. The gentleman shows, by his manner, that he has been used to respect from others: the scholar, that he lays claim to self-respect and to a certain independence of opinion. The one has been accustomed to the best company; the other has passed his time in cultivating an intimacy with the best authors. There is nothing forward or vulgar in the behaviour of the one; nothing shrewd or petulant in the observations of the other, as if he should astonish the byestanders, or was astonished himself at his own discoveries. Good taste and good sense, like common politeness, are, or are supposed to be, matters of course. One is distinguished by an appearance of marked attention to every one present; the other manifests an habitual air of abstraction and absence of mind. The one is not an upstart with all the self-important airs of the founder of his own fortune; nor the other a self-taught man, with the repulsive self-sufficiency which arises from an ignorance of what hundreds have known before him. We must excuse perhaps a little conscious family-pride in the one, and a little harmless pedantry in the other. As there is a class of the first character which sinks into the mere gentleman, that is, which has nothing but this sense of respectability and propriety to support it—so the character of a scholar not unfrequently dwindles down into the shadow of a shade, till nothing is left of it but the mere book-worm. There is often something amiable as well as enviable in this last character. I know one such instance, at least. The person I mean has an admiration for learning, if he is only dazzled by its light. He lives among old authors, if he does not enter much into their spirit. He handles the covers, and turns over the page, and is familiar with the names and dates. He is busy and self-involved. He hangs like a film and cobweb upon letters, or is like the dust upon the outside of knowledge, which should not be rudely brushed aside. He follows learning as its shadow; but, as such, he is respectable. He browzes on the husk and leaves of books, as the young fawn browzes on the bark and leaves of trees. Such a one lives all his life in a dream of learning, and has never once had his sleep broken by a real sense of things. He believes implicitly in genius, truth, virtue, liberty, because he finds the names of these things in books. He thinks that love and friendship are the finest things imaginable, both in practice and theory. The legend of good women is to him no fiction. When he steals from the twilight of his cell, the scene breaks upon him like an illuminated missal, and all the people he sees are but so many figures in a *camera obscura*. He reads the world, like a favourite volume, only to find beauties in it, or like an edition of some old work which he is preparing for the press, only to make emendations in it, and correct the errors that have inadvertently slipt in He and his dog Tray are much the same honest, simple-hearted, faithful, affectionate creatures—if Tray could but read! His mind cannot take the impression of vice: but the gentleness of his nature turns gall to milk. He would not hurt a fly. He draws the picture of mankind from the guileless simplicity of his own heart: and when he dies, his spirit will take its smiling leave without having ever had an ill thought of others, or the consciousness of one in itself!

ESSAY XXVII.

My First Acquaintance with Poets.

My father was a dissenting minister at Wem, in Shropshire; and in the year 1798 (the figures that compose that date are to me like the "dreaded name of Demogorgon") Mr. Coleridge came to Shrewsbury, to succeed Mr. Rowe in the spiritual charge of a Unitarian congregation there. He did not come till late on the Saturday afternoon before he was to preach; and Mr. Rowe, who himself went down to the coach in a state of anxiety and expectation to look for the arrival of his successor, could find no one at all answering the description but a round-faced man in a short black coat (like a shooting jacket) which hardly seemed to have been made for him, but who seemed to be talking at a great rate to his fellow-passengers. Mr. Rowe had scarce returned to give an account of his disappointment when the round-faced man in black entered, and dissipated all doubts on the subject by beginning to talk. He did not cease while he stayed; nor has he since, that I know of. He held the good town of Shrewsbury in delightful suspense for three weeks that he remained there, "fluttering the *proud Salopians*, like an eagle in a dove-cote;" and the Welsh mountains that skirt the horizon with their tempestuous confusion agree to have heard no such mystic sounds since the days of

> "High-born Hoel's harp or soft Llewellyn's lay!"

As we passed along between Wem and Shrewsbury, and I eyed their blue tops seen through the wintry branches, or the red rustling leaves of the sturdy oak-trees by the road-side, a sound was in my ears as of Siren's song; I was stunned, startled with it, as from deep sleep; but I had no notion then that I should ever be able to express my admiration to others in motley imagery or quaint allusion, till the light of his genius shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road. I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the way-side, crushed, bleeding, lifeless; but now, bursting from the deadly bands that " bound them,

" With Styx nine times round them,"

my ideas float on winged words, and as they expand their plumes, catch the golden light of other years. My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, dark, obscure, with longings infinite and unsatisfied; my heart, shut up in the prison-house of this rude clay, has never found, nor will it ever find, a heart to speak to; but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, or at length found a language to express itself, I owe to Coleridge. But this is not to my purpose.

My father lived ten miles from Shrewsbury, and was in the habit of exchanging visits with Mr. Rowe, and with Mr. Jenkins of Whitchurch (nine miles farther on,) according to the custom of dissenting ministers in each other's neighbourhood. A line of communication is thus established, by which the flame of civil and religious liberty is kept alive, and nourishes its smouldering fire unquenchable, like the fires in the Agamemnon of Æschylus, placed at different stations, that waited for ten long years to announce with their blazing pyramids the destruction of Troy. Coleridge had agreed to come over and see my father, according to the courtesy of the country, as Mr. Rowe's probable successor; but, in the mean time, I had gone to hear him preach the Sunday after his arrival. A poet and a philosopher getting up into a Unitarian pulpit to preach the gospel, was a romance in these degenerate days, a sort of revival of the primitive spirit of Christianity, which was not to be resisted.

It was in January, 1798, that I rose one morning before day light, to walk ten miles in the mud, to hear this celebrated person preach. Never, the longest day I have to live, shall I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one, in the winter of the year 1798,—*Il y a des impressions que ni le tems ni les circonstances peuvent effacer. Dusse-je vivre des siecles entiers, le doux tems de* *ma jeunesse ne peut renaitre pour moi, ni s'effacer jamais dans ma memoire.* When I got there, the organ was playing the 100th psalm, and when it was done, Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text, "And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE." As he gave out his text, his voice "rose like a stream of rich distilled perfumes," and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The idea of St. John came into my mind, "of one crying in the wilderness, who had his loins girt about, and whose food was locusts and wild honey." The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. The sermon was upon peace and war; upon church and state—not their alliance, but their separation—on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to one another. He talked of those who had "inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore." He made a poetical and pastoral excursion,—and to show the fatal effects of war, drew a striking contrast between the simple shepherd-boy, driving his team afield, or sitting under the hawthorn, piping to his flock, "as though he should never be old," and the same poor country-lad, crimped, kidnapped, brought into town, made drunk at an alehouse, turned into a wretched drummer-boy, with his hair sticking on end with powder and pomatum, a long cue at his back, and tricked out in the loathsome finery of the profession of blood.

"Such were the notes our once-loved poet sung."

And for myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and philosophy had met together, Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion. This was even beyond my hopes. I returned home well satisfied. The sun that was still labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists, seemed an emblem of the *good cause;* and the cold dank drops of dew, that hung half-melted on the beard of the thistle, had something genial and refreshing in them; for there was a spirit of hope and youth in all nature, that turned every thing into good. The face of nature had not then the brand of Jus Divinum on it:

"Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.'

On the Tuesday following, the half-inspired speaker came. I was called down into the room where he was, and went half-hoping, half-afraid. He received me very graciously, and I listened for a long time without uttering a word. I did not suffer in his opinion by my silence. "For those two hours," he afterwards was pleased to say, "he was conversing with William Hazlitt's forehead!" His appearance was different from what I had anticipated from seeing him before. At a distance, and in the dim light of the chapel, there was to me a strange wildness in his aspect, a dusky obscurity, and I thought him pitted with the small-pox. His complexion was at that time clear, and even bright,—

"As are the children of yon azure sheen."

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them, like a sea with darkened lustre. "A certain tender bloom his face o'erspread," a purple tinge as we see it in the pale thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent: his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing—like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So at least I comment on it after the event. Coleridge, in his person, was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord Hamlet, "somewhat fat and pursy." His hair (now, alas! grey) was then black and glossy as the raven's, and fell in smooth masses over his forehead. This long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenward; and is traditionally inseparable (though of a different colour) from the pictures of Christ. It ought to belong, as a character, to all who preach *Christ crucified*, and Coleridge was at that time one of those!

It was curious to observe the contrast between him and my father, who was a veteran in the cause, and then declining into the vale of years. He had been a poor Irish lad, carefully brought up by his parents, and sent to the University of Glasgow (where he studied under Adam Smith) to prepare him for his future destination. It was his mother's proudest wish to see her son a dissenting minister. So, if we look back to past generations (as far as eye can reach), we see the same hopes, fears, wishes, followed by the same disappointments, throbbing in the human heart; and so we may see them (if we look forward) rising up for ever, and disappearing, like vapourish bubbles, in the human breast! After being tossed about from congregation to congregation in the heats of the Unitarian controversy, and squabbles about the American war, he had been relegated to an obscure village, where he was to spend the last thirty years of his life, far from the only converse that he loved, the talk about disputed texts of Scripture, and the cause of civil and religious liberty. Here he passed his days, repining, but resigned, in the study of the Bible, and the perusal of the commentators,—huge folios, not easily got through, one of which would outlast a winter! Why did he pore on these from morn to night (with the exception of a walk in the fields or a turn in the garden to gather broccoli-plants or kidney beans of his own rearing, with no small degree of pride and pleasure)? Here were "no figures nor no fantasies,"—neither poetry nor philosophy—nothing to dazzle, nothing to excite modern curiosity; but to his lack-lustre eyes there appeared, within the pages of the ponderous, unwieldy neglected tomes, the sacred name of JEHOVAH in Hebrew capitals: pressed down by the weight of the style, worn to the last fading thinness of the understanding, there were glimpses, glimmering notions of the patriarchal wanderings, with palm-trees hovering in the horizon, and processions of camels at the distance of three thousand years; there was Moses with the burning bush the number of the Twelve Tribes, types, shadows, glosses on th law and the prophets; there were discussions (dull enough) on the age of Methuselah, a mighty speculation! there were outlines, rude guesses at the shape of Noah's Ark and of the riches of Solomon's Temple; questions as to the date of the creation, predictions of the end of all things; the great lapses of time, the strange mutations of the globe, were unfolded with the voluminous leaf, as it turned over; and though the soul might slumber with an hieroglyphic veil of inscrutable mysteries drawn over it, yet it was in a slumber ill exchanged for all the sharpened realities of sense, wit, fancy, or reason. My father's life was comparatively a dream; but it was a dream of infinity and eternity, of death, the resurrection, and a judgment to come!

No two individuals were ever more unlike than were the host and his guest. A poet was to my father a sort of nondescript yet whatever added grace to the Unitarian cause was to him welcome. He could hardly have been more surprised or pleased, if our visitor had worn wings. Indeed, his thoughts had wings; and as the silken sounds rustled round our little wainscoted parlor, my father threw back his spectacles over his forehead, his white hairs mixing with its sanguine hue; and a smile of delight beamed across his rugged cordial face, to think that Truth had found a new ally in Fancy!* Besides, Coleridge seemed to take considerable notice of me, and that of itself was enough. He talked very familiarly, but agreeably, and glanced over a variety of subjects. At dinner-time he grew more animated, and dilated in a very edifying manner on Mary Wolstonecraft and Mackintosh. The last, he said, he considered (on my father's speaking of his 'Vindiciæ Gallicæ' as a capital performance) as a clever scholastic man—a master of the topics,—or as the ready warehouseman of letters, who knew exactly where to lay his hand on what he wanted, though the goods were not his own. He thought him no match for Burke, either in style or matter. Burke was a metaphysician, Mackintosh a mere logician. Burke was an orator (almost a poet) who reasoned in figures, because he had an eye for nature: Mackintosh, on the other hand, was a rhetorician, who had only an eye to commonplaces. On this I ventured to say that I had always entertained a great opinion of Burke, and that (as far as I could find) the speaking of him with contempt might be made the test of a vulgar democratical mind. This was the first observation I ever made to Coleridge, and he said it was a very just and striking one. I remember the leg of Welsh mutton and the turnips on the table that day had the finest flavor imaginable. Coleridge added that Mackintosh and Tom Wedgwood (of whom, however, he spoke highly) had expressed a very indifferent opinion of his friend Mr. Wordsworth, on which he remarked to them—"He strides on so far before you, that he dwindles in the distance!" Godwin had once boasted to him of having carried on an argument with Mackintosh for three hours with dubious success; Coleridge told him—"If there had been a man of genius in the room, he would have settled the question in five minutes." He asked me if I had ever seen Mary Wolstonecraft, and I said, I had once for a few moments, and that she seemed to me to turn off Godwin's objection to something she advanced with quite a playful, easy air. He replied, that "this was only one instance of the ascendency which people of imagination exercised over those of mere intellect." He did not rate Godwin very high* (this was caprice or prejudice, real or affected,) but he had a great idea of Mrs. Wolstonecraft's powers of conversation; none at all of her talent for book-making. We talked a little about Holcroft. He had been asked if he was not much struck *with* him, and he said, he thought himself in more danger of being struck *by* him. I complained that he would not let me get on at all, for he required a definition of every the commonest word, exclaiming, "What do you mean by a *sensation*, Sir? What do you mean by an *idea?*" This, Coleridge said, was barricadoing the road to truth;—it was setting up a turnpike-gate at every step we took. I forget a great number of things, many more than I remember; but the day passed off pleasantly, and the next morning Mr. Coleridge was to return to Shrewsbury. When I came down to breakfast, I found that he had just received a letter from his friend, T. Wedgwood, making him an offer of £150 a-year if he choose to waive his present pursuit, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Coleridge seemed to make up his mind to close with this proposal in the act of tying on one of his shoes. It threw an additional damp on his departure. It took the wayward enthusiast quite from us to cast him into Deva's winding vales, or by the shores of old romance. Instead of living at ten miles' distance, of being the pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Shrewsbury, he was henceforth to inhabit the Hill of Parnassus, to be a Shepherd on the Delectable Mountains. Alas! I knew not the way thither, and felt very little gratitude for Mr. Wedgwood's bounty. I was presently relieved from this dilemma; for Mr. Coleridge, asking for a pen and ink, and going to a table to write something on a bit of card, advanced towards me with undulating step, and giving me the precious document, said that that was his address, *Mr. Coleridge, Nether-Stowey, Somersetshire;* and that he should be glad to see me there in a few weeks' time, and, if I chose, would come half-way to meet me. I was not less surprised than the shepherd-boy (this simile is to be found in Cassandra) when he sees a thunder-bolt fall close at his feet. I stammered out my acknowledgments and acceptance of this offer (I thought Mr. Wedgwood's annuity a trifle to it) as well as I could; and this mighty business being settled, the poet-preacher took leave, and I accompanied him six miles on the road. It was a fine morning in the middle of winter, and he talked the whole way. The scholar in Chaucer is described as going

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* My father was one of those who mistook his talent after all. He used to be very much dissatisfied that I preferred his Letters to his Sermons. The last were forced and dry: the first came naturally from him. For ease, half-plays on words, and a supine, monkish, indolent pleasan ry, I have never seen them equalled.

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* He complained in particular of the presumption of his attempting to establish the future immortality of man, "without" (as he said) "knowing what Death was or what Life was"—and the tone in which he pronounced these two words seemed to convey a complete image of both.

——"Sounding on his way."

So Coleridge went on his. In digressing, in dilating, in passing, from subject to subject, he appeared to me to float in air, to slide on ice. He told me in confidence (going along) that he should have preached two sermons before he accepted the situation at Shrewsbury, one on Infant Baptism, the other on the Lord's Supper, showing that he could not administer either, which would have effectually disqualified him for the object in view I observed that he continually crossed me on the way by shifting from one side of the foot-path to the other. This struck me as an odd movement ; but I did not at that time connect it with any instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle, as I have done since. He seemed unable to keep on in a straight line. He spoke slightingly of Hume (whose 'Essay on Miracles' he said was stolen from an objection started in one of South's sermons—*Credat Judæus Apella !*) I was not very much pleased at this account of Hume, for I had just been reading, with infinite relish, that completest of all metaphysical *choke-pears*, his 'Treatise on Human Nature,' to which the 'Essays,' in point of scholastic subtilty and close reasoning, are mere elegant trifling, light summer reading. Coleridge even denied the excellence of Hume's general style, which I think betrayed a want of taste or candour. He however made me amends by the manner in which he spoke of Berkeley. He dwelt particularly on his 'Essay on Vision' as a masterpiece of analytical reasoning. So it undoubtedly is. He was exceedingly angry with Dr. Johnson for striking the stone with his foot, in allusion to this author's Theory of Matter and Spirit, and saying, "Thus I confute him, Sir." Coleridge drew a parallel (I don't know how he brought about the connection) between Bishop Berkeley and Tom Paine. He said the one was an instance of a subtle, the other of an acute mind, than which no two things could be more distinct. The one was a shop-boy's quality, the other the characteristic of a philosopher. He considered Bishop Butler as a true philosopher, a profound and conscientious thinker, a genuine reader of nature and of his own mind. He did not speak of his 'Analogy,' but of his 'Sermons at the Rolls' Chapel,' of which I had never heard. Coleridge somehow always contrived to prefer the *unknown* to the *known*. In this instance he was right. The 'Analogy' is a tissue of sophistry, of wire-drawn, theological special-pleading ; the 'Sermons' (with the Preface to them) are in a fine vein of deep, matured reflection, a candid appeal to our observation of human nature, without pedantry and without bias. I told Coleridge I had written a few remarks, and was sometimes foolish enough to believe that I had made a discovery on the same subject (the 'Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind')—and I tried to explain my view of it to Coleridge, who listened with great willingness, but I did not succeed in making myself understood. I sat down to the task shortly afterwards for the twentieth time, got new pens and paper, determined to make clear work of it, wrote a few meagre sentences in the skeleton-style of a mathematical demonstration, stopped half-way down the second page; and after trying in vain to pump up any words, images, notions, apprehensions, facts, or observations from that gulph of abstraction in which I had plunged myself for four or five years preceding, gave up the attempt as labour in vain, and shed tears of helpless despondency on the blank unfinished paper. I can write fast enough now. Am I better than I was then? Oh no! One truth discovered, one pang of regret at not being able to express it, is better than all the fluency and flippancy in the world. Would that I could go back to what I then was! Why can we not revive past times as we can revisit old places? If I had the quaint Muse of Sir Philip Sidney to assist me, I would write a *Sonnet to the Road between Wem and Shrewsbury*, and immortalize every step of it by some fond enigmatical conceit. I would swear that the very milestones had ears, and that Harmer-hill stooped with all its pines, to listen to a poet, as he passed! I remember but one other topic of discourse in this walk. He mentioned Paley, praised the naturalness and clearness of his style, but condemned his sentiments, thought him a mere time-serving casuist, and said that "the fact of his work on Moral and Political Philosophy being made a text-book in our Universities was a disgrace to the national character." We parted at the six-mile stone; and I returned homeward, pensive but much pleased. I had met with unexpected notice from a person, whom I believed to have been prejudiced against me. "Kind and affable to me had been his condescension, and should be honoured ever with suitable regard." He was the first poet I had known, and he certainly answered to that inspired name. I had heard a great deal of his powers of conversation, and was not disappointed. In fact, I never met with any thing at all like them, either before or since. I could easily credit the accounts which were circulated of his holding forth to a large party of ladies and gentlemen, an evening or two before, on the Berkeleian Theory, when he made the whole material universe look like a transparency of fine words; and another story (which I believe he has somewhere told himself) of his being asked to a party at Birmingham, of his smoking tobacco and going to sleep after dinner on a sofa, where the company found him to their no small surprise, which was increased to wonder when he started up of a sudden, and rubbing his eyes, looked about him, and launched into a three-hours' description of the third heaven, of which he had had a dream, very different from Mr. Southey's 'Vision of Judgment,' and also from that other 'Vision of Judgment,' which Mr. Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge-street Junto, took into his especial keeping!

On my way back, I had a sound in my ears—it was the voice of Fancy: I had a light before me—it was the face of Poetry. The one still lingers there, the other has not quitted my side! Coleridge in truth met me half-way on the ground of philosophy, or I should not have been won over to his imaginative creed. I had an uneasy, pleasurable sensation all the time, till I was to visit him. During those months the chill breath of winter gave me a welcoming; the vernal air was balm and inspiration to me. The golden sun-sets, the silver star of evening, lighted me on my way to new hopes and prospects. *I was to visit Coleridge in the Spring.* This circumstance was never absent from my thoughts, and mingled with all my feelings. I wrote to him at the time proposed, and received an answer postponing my intended visit for a week or two, but very cordially urging me to complete my promise then. This delay did not damp, but rather increased my ardour. In the mean time, I went to Llangollen Vale, by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery; and I must say I was enchanted with it. I had been reading Coleridge's description of England, in his fine 'Ode on the Departing Year,' and I applied it, *con amore*, to the objects before me. That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence: in the river that winds through it, my spirit was baptised in the waters of Helicon!

I returned home, and soon after set out on my journey with unworn heart and untried feet. My way lay through Worcester and Gloucester, and by Upton, where I thought of Tom Jones and the adventure of the muff. I remember getting completely wet through one day, and stopping at an inn (I think it was at Tewkesbury,) where I sat up all night to read 'Paul and Virginia.' Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read! I recollect a remark of Coleridge's upon this very book,—that nothing could show the gross indelicacy of French manners and the entire corruption of their imagination more strongly than the behaviour of the heroine in the last fatal scene, who turns away from a person on board the sinking vessel, that offers to save her life, because he has thrown off his clothes to assist him in swimming. Was this a time to think of such a circumstance? I once hinted to Wordsworth, as we were sailing in his boat on Grasmere lake, that I thought he had borrowed the idea of his 'Poems on the Naming of Places' from the local inscriptions of the same kind in 'Paul and Virginia.' He did not own the obligation, and stated some distinction without a difference, in defence of his claim to originality. Any the slightest variation would be sufficient for this purpose in his mind; for whatever *he* added or altered would inevitably be worth all that any one else had done, and contain the marrow of the sentiment. I was still two days before the time fixed for my arrival, for I had taken care to set out early enough. I stopped these two days at Bridgewater, and when I was tired of sauntering on the banks of its muddy river, returned to the inn, and read 'Camilla.' So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best. I have wanted only one thing to make me happy; but wanting that, have wanted every thing!

I arrived and was well received. The country about Nether Stowey is beautiful, green and hilly, and near the sea-shore. I saw it but the other day, after an interval of twenty years, from a hill near Taunton. How was the map of my life spread out before me, as the map of the country lay at my feet! In the afternoon, Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family mansion of the St. Aubins, where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet's, who gave him the free use of it. Somehow that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing*. The mind opened, and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath "the scales that fence" our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the 'Lyrical Ballads,' which were still in manuscript, or in the form of 'Sybilline Leaves.' I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family-portraits of the age of George I. and II., and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

——"hear the loud stag speak."

In the outset of life (and particularly at this time I felt it so) our imagination has a body to it. We are in a state between sleeping and waking, and have indistinct but glorious glimpses of strange shapes, and there is always something to come better than what we see. As in our dreams the fulness of the blood gives warmth and reality to the coinage of the brain, so in youth our ideas are clothed, and fed, and pampered with our good spirits; we breathe thick with thoughtless happiness, the weight of future years presses on the strong pulses of the heart, and we repose with undisturbed faith in truth and good. As we advance, we exhaust our fund of enjoyment and of hope. We are no longer wrapped in *lamb's-wool*, lulled in Elysium. As we taste the pleasures of life, their spirit evaporates, the sense palls; and nothing is left but the phantoms, the lifeless shadows of what *has been!*

That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of the old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of 'Betty Foy.' I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the 'Thorn,' the Mad Mother,' and the 'Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman,' I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

> "In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,"

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of Spring,

> "While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed."

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

> "Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,"

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight!" He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-fact-ness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air: it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the goldfinch sang. He said, however, (if I remember right,) that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own 'Peter Bell.' There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance,) an intense, high, narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantry's bust wants the marking traits; but he was teazed into making it regular and heavy; Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said triumphantly that "his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life." He had been to see the 'Castle Spectre' by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said "it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove."

This *ad captandum* merit was however by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low, latticed window, said, "How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!" I thought within myself, "With what eyes these poets see nature!" and ever after when I saw the sun-set stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr. Wordsworth for having made one for me! We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of 'Peter Bell' in the open air; and the comment made upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, "his face was as a book where men might read strange matters," and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical.*

Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copsewood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel-walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption. Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible. Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm-trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *flip*. It was agreed, among other things, that we should make a jaunt down the Bristol Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, Coleridge, John Chester, and I. This Chester was a native of Nether Stowey, one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey, or bees in swarming-time to the sound of a brass pan. He "followed in the chace, like a dog who hunts, not like one that made up the cry." He had on a brown cloth coat, boots, and corduroy breeches, was low in stature, bow-legged, had a drag in his walk like a drover, which he assisted by a hazel switch, and kept on a sort of trot by the side of Coleridge, like a running footman by a state coach, that he might not lose a syllable or sound, that fell from Coleridge's lips. He told me his private opinion, that Coleridge was a wonderful man. He scarcely opened his lips, much less offered an opinion the whole way: yet of the three, had I to choose during that journey, I would be John Chester. He afterwards followed Coleridge into Germany, where the Kantean philosophers were puzzled how to bring him under any of their categories. When he sat down at table with his idol, John's felicity was complete; Sir Walter Scott's, or Mr. Blackwood's, when they sat down at the same table with the King, was not more so. We passed Dunster on our right, a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eyeing it wistfully as it lay below us: contrasted with the woody scene around, it looked as clear, as pure, as *embrowned* and ideal as any landscape I have seen since of Gasper Poussin's or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march—(our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue) —through Minehead and by the Blue Anchor, and on to Linton, which we did not reach till near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment. We however knocked the people of the house up at last, and we were repaid for our apprehensions and fatigue by some excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs. The view in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on dark brown heaths overlooking the Channel, with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the sea-side, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in the 'Ancient Mariner.' At Linton the character of the sea-coast becomes more marked and rugged. There is a place called the *Valley of the Rocks* (I suspect this was only the poetical name for it) bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the sea-gull for ever wheels its screaming flight. On the tops of these are huge stones thrown transverse, as if an earthquake had tossed them there, and behind these is a fretwork of perpendicular rocks, something like the *Giant's Causeway*.

A thunder-storm came on while we were at the inn, and Coleridge was running out bareheaded to enjoy the commotion of the elements in the *Valley of Rocks*, but as if in spite, the clouds only muttered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops. Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made this place the scene of a prose-tale, which was to have been in the manner of, but far superior to, the 'Death of Abel,' but they had relinquished the design. In the morning of the second day, we breakfasted luxuriously in an old-fashioned parlor, on tea, toast, eggs and honey, in the very sight of the bee-hives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and wild flowers that had produced it. On this occasion Coleridge spoke of Virgil's 'Georgics,' but not well. I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant. It was in this room that we found a little worn-out copy of the 'Seasons,' lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, "*That* is true fame!" He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural. He spoke of Cowper as the best modern poet. He said the 'Lyrical Ballads' were an experiment about to be tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. Some comparison was introduced between Shakespear and Milton. He said "he hardly knew which to prefer. Shakespear seemed to him a mere stripling in the art; he was as tall and as strong, with infinitely more activity than Milton, but he never appeared to have come to man's estate; or if he had, he would not have been a man, but a monster." He spoke with contempt of Gray, and with intolerance of Pope. He did not like the versification of the latter. He observed that "the ears of these couplet-writers might be charged with having short memories, that could not retain the harmony of whole passages." He thought little of Junius as a writer; he had a dislike of Dr. Johnson; and a much higher opinion of Burke as an orator and politician, than of Fox or Pitt. He however thought him very inferior in richness of style and imagery to some of our elder prose-writers, particularly Jeremy Taylor. He liked Richardson, but not Fielding; nor could I get him to enter into the merits of 'Caleb Williams.'* In short, he was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgment fair play; capricious, perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes. We loitered on the "ribbed seasand," in such talk as this a whole morning, and I recollect met with a curious sea-weed, of which John Chester told us the country name! A fisherman gave Coleridge an account of a boy that had been drowned the day before, and that they had tried to save him at the risk of their own lives. He said "he did not know now it was that they ventured, but, Sir, we have a *nature* towards one another." This expression, Coleridge remarked to me, was a fine illustration of that theory of disinterestedness which I (in common with Butler) had adopted. I broached to him an argument of mine to prove that *likeness* was not mere association of ideas. I said that the mark in the sand put one in mind of a man's foot, not because it was part of a former impression of a man's foot (for it was quite new), but because it was like the shape of a man's foot. He assented to the justness of this distinction (which I have explained at length elsewhere, for the benefit of the curious,) and John Chester listened; not from any interest in the subject, but because he was astonished that I should be able to suggest any thing to Coleridge that he did not already know. We returned on the third morning, and Coleridge remarked the silent cottage-smoke curling up the valleys where, a few evenings before, we had seen the lights gleaming through the dark.

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* He had no idea of pictures, of Claude or Raphael, and at this time I had as little as he. He sometimes gives a striking account at present of the Cartoons at Pisa, by Buffamalco and others; of one in particular, where Death is seen in the air brandishing his scythe, and the great and mighty of the earth shudder at his approach, while the beggars and the wretched kneel to him as their deliverer. He would of course understand so broad and fine a moral as this at any time.

In a day or two after we arrived at Stowey, we set out, I on my return home, and he for Germany. It was a Sunday morning, and he was to preach that day for Dr. Toulmin of Taunton. I asked him if he had prepared any thing for the occasion? He said he had not even thought of the text, but should as soon as we parted. I did not go to hear him,—this was a fault,—but we met in the evening at Bridgewater. The next day we had a long day's walk to Bristol, and sat down, I recollect, by a well-side on the road, to cool ourselves and satisfy our thirst, when Coleridge repeated to me some descriptive lines from his tragedy of 'Remorse;' which I must say became his mouth and that occasion better than they, some years after, did Mr Elliston's and the Drury-lane boards,—

> "O memory! shield me from the world's poor strife
> And give those scenes thine everlasting life."

I saw no more of him for a year or two, during which period he had been wandering in the Hartz Forest in Germany; and his return was cometary, meteorous, unlike his setting out. It was not till some time after that I knew his friends Lamb and Southey. The last always appears to me (as I first saw him) with a common-place book under his arm, and the first with a *bon-mot* in his mouth. It was at Godwin's that I met him with Holcroft and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best—*Man as he was, or man as he is to be.* "Give me," says Lamb, "man as he is *not* to be." This saying was the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues. Enough of this for the present.

> "But there is matter for another rhyme,
> And I to this may add a second tale."

ESSAY XXVIII.

Of Persons one would wish to have seen.

"Come like shadows—so depart."

Lamb it was, I think, who suggested this subject, as well as the defence of Guy Faux, which I urged him to execute. As, however, he would undertake neither, I suppose I must do both—a task for which he would have been much fitter, no less from the temerity than the felicity of his pen—

> "Never so sure our rapture to create
> As when it touched the brink of all we hate."

Compared with him I shall, I fear, make but a common-place piece of business of it; but I should be loth the idea was entirely lost, and besides I may avail myself of some hints of his in the progress of it. I am sometimes, I suspect, a better reporter of the ideas of other people than expounder of my own. I pursue the one too far into paradox or mysticism; the others I am not bound to follow farther than I like, or than seems fair and reasonable.

On the question being started, A—— said, "I suppose the two first persons you would choose to see would be the two greatest names in English literature, Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Locke?" In this A——, as usual, reckoned without his host. Every one burst out a-laughing at the expression of Lamb's face, in which impatience was restrained by courtesy. "Yes, the greatest names," he stammered out hastily, "but they were not persons—not persons." "Not persons?" said A——, looking wise and foolish at the same time, afraid his triumph might be premature. "That is," rejoined Lamb, "not characters you know. By Mr. Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, you mean the 'Essay on the Human Understanding,' and the 'Principia,' which we have to this day. Beyond their contents there is nothing personally interesting in the men. But what we want to see any one *bodily* for, is when there is something peculiar, striking in the individuals, more than we can learn from their writings, and yet are curious to know. I dare say Locke and Newton were very like Kneller's portraits of them. But who could paint Shakespear?"—"Ay," retorted A——, "there it is; then I suppose you would prefer seeing him and Milton instead?" "No," said Lamb, "neither. I have seen so much of Shakespear on the stage and on book-stalls, in frontispieces and on mantel-pieces, that I am quite tired of the everlasting repetition: and as to Milton's face, the impressions that have come down to us of it I do not like; it is too starched and puritanical; and I should be afraid of losing some of the manna of his poetry in the leaven of his countenance and the precisian's band and gown." "I shall guess no more," said A——. "Who is it, then, you would like to see 'in his habit as he lived,' if you had your choice of the whole range of English literature?" Lamb then named Sir Thomas Brown and Fulke Greville, the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, as the two worthies whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the door of his apartment in their night-gown and slippers, and to encounter friendly greeting with them. At this A—— laughed outright, and conceived Lamb was jesting with him; but as no one followed his example, he thought there might be something in it, and waited for an explanation in a state of whimsical suspense. Lamb then (as well as I can remember a conversation that passed twenty years ago—how time slips!) went on as follows: "The reason why I pitch upon those two authors is, that their writings are riddles, and they themselves the most mysterious of personages. They resemble the soothsayers of old, who dealt in dark hints and doubtful oracles; and I should like to ask them the meaning of what no mortal but themselves, I should suppose, can fathom. There is Dr. Johnson, I have no curiosity, no strange uncertainty about him: he and Boswell together have pretty well let me into the secret of what passed through his mind. He and other writers like him are sufficiently explicit: my friends whose repose I should be tempted to disturb (were it in my power), are implicit, inextricable, inscrutable.

" When I look at that obscure but gorgeous prose-composition, the ' Urn-burial,' I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure ; or it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author to lead me through it. Besides, who would not be curious to see the lineaments of a man who, having himself been twice married, wished that mankind were propagated like trees!

" As to Fulke Greville, he is like nothing but one of his own ' Prologues spoken by the ghost of an old king of Ormus,' a truly formidable and inviting personage : his style is apocalyptical, cabalistical, a knot worthy of such an apparition to untie ; and for the unravelling a passage or two, I would stand the brunt of an encounter with so portentous a commentator ! " I am afraid in that case," said A——, " that if the mystery were once cleared up, the merit might be lost ;"—and turning to me, whispered a friendly apprehension, that while Lamb continued to admire these old crabbed authors, he would never become a popular writer. Dr. Donne was mentioned as a writer of the same period, with a very interesting countenance, whose history was singular, and whose meaning was often quite as *un-come-atable*, without a personal citation from the dead, as that of any of his contemporaries. The volume was produced ; and while some one was expatiating on the exquisite simplicity and beauty of the portrait prefixed to the old edition, A—— got hold of the poetry, and exclaiming " What have we here ?" read the following :

" Here lies a She-Sun and a He-Moon there,
She gives the best light to his sphere,
Or each is both and all, and so,
They unto one another nothing owe."

There was no resisting this, till Lamb seizing the volume, turned to the beautiful " Lines to his Mistress," dissuading her from accompanying him abroad, and read them with suffused features and a faltering tongue.

"By our first strange and fatal interview,
By all desires which thereof did ensue,
By our long starving hopes, by that remorse
Which my words' masculine persuasive force
Begot in thee, and by the memory
Of hurts, which spies and rivals threaten'd me,
I calmly beg. But by thy father's wrath,
By all pains which want and divorcement hath,
I conjure thee; and all the oaths which I
And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy,
Here I unswear, and overswear them thus,
Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous.
Temper, oh fair Love! love's impetuous rage,
Be my true mistress still, not my feign'd page;
I'll go, and by thy kind leave, leave behind
Thee! only worthy to nurse in my mind,
Thirst to come back; oh, if thou die before
My soul from other lands to thee shall soar,
Thy (else almighty) beauty cannot move
Rage from the seas, nor thy love teach them love.
Nor tame wild Boreas' harshness; thou hast read,
How roughly he in pieces shiver'd
Fair Orithea, whom he swore he loved.
Fall ill or good, 'tis madness to have prov'd
Dangers unurg'd: Feed on this flattery,
That absent lovers one in th' other be.
Dissemble nothing, not a boy; nor change
Thy body's habit, nor mind; be not strange
To thyself only. All will spy in thy face
A blushing, womanly, discovering grace.
Richly clothed apes are called apes, and as soon
Eclips'd as bright we call the moon the moon.
Men of France, changeable cameleons,
Spitals of diseases, shops of fashions,
Love's fuellers, and the rightest company
Of players, which upon the world's stage be,
Will quickly know thee. . . . . O stay here! for thee
England is only a worthy gallery,
To walk in expectation; till from thence
Our greatest King call thee to his presence.
When I am gone, dream me some happiness,
Nor let thy looks our long hid love confess.
Nor praise, nor dispraise me; nor bless, nor curse
Openly loves force, nor in bed fright thy nurse
With midnight startings, crying out, Oh, oh,

> Nurse, oh, my love is slain, I saw him go
> O'er the white Alps alone; I saw him, I,
> Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.
> Augur me better chance, except dread Jove
> Think it enough for me to have had thy love."

Some one then inquired of Lamb if we could not see from the window the Temple-walk in which Chaucer used to take his exercise; and on his name being put to the vote, I was pleased to find that there was a general sensation in his favour in all but A——, who said something about the ruggedness of the metre, and even objected to the quaintness of the orthography. I was vexed at this superficial gloss, pertinaciously reducing every thing to its own trite level, and asked "if he did not think it would be worth while to scan the eye that had first greeted the Muse in that dim twilight and early dawn of English literature; to see the head, round which the visions of fancy must have played like gleams of inspiration or a sudden glory; to watch those lips that 'lisped in numbers, for the numbers came'—as by a miracle, or as if the dumb should speak? Nor was it alone that he had been the first to tune his native tongue (however imperfectly to modern ears); but he was himself a noble, manly character, standing before his age and striving to advance it; a pleasant humourist withal, who has not only handed down to us the living manners of his time, but had, no doubt, store of curious and quaint devices, and would make as hearty a companion as Mine Host of the Tabard. His interview with Petrarch is fraught with interest. Yet I would rather have seen Chaucer in company with the author of the 'Decameron,' and have heard them exchange their best stories together,—the Squire's Tale against the Story of the Falcon, the Wife of Bath's Prologue against the Adventures of Friar Albert. How fine to see the high mysterious brow which learning then wore, relieved by the gay, familiar tone of men of the world, by the courtesies of genius! Surely, the thoughts and feelings which passed through the minds of these great revivers of learning, these Cadmuses who sowed the teeth of letters, must have stamped an expression on their features, as different from the moderns as their books, and well worth the perusal. Dante," I continued, "is as interesting a person as his own Ugolino, one whose lineaments curiosity would as eagerly devour in order to penetrate his spirit, and the only one of the Italian poets I should care much to see. There is a fine portrait of Ariosto by no less a hand than Titian's; light, Moorish, spirited, but not answering our idea. The same artist's large colossal profile of Peter Aretine is the only likeness of the kind that has the effect of conversing with 'the mighty dead,' and this is truly spectral, ghastly, necromantic." Lamb put it to me if I should like to see Spenser as well as Chaucer; and I answered without hesitation, "No; for his beauties were ideal, visionary, not palpable or personal, and therefore connected with less curiosity about the man. His poetry was the essence of romance, a very halo round the bright orb of fancy; and the bringing in the individual might dissolve the charm. No tones of voice could come up to the mellifluous cadence of his verse; no form but of a winged angel could vie with the airy shapes he has described. He was (to our apprehensions) rather 'a creature of the element, that lived in the rainbow and played in the plighted clouds,' than an ordinary mortal. Or if he did appear, I should wish it to be as a mere vision, like one of his own pageants, and that he should pass by unquestioned like a dream or sound—

——'*That* was Arion crown'd:
So went he playing on the wat'ry plain!'"

Captain Burney muttered something about Columbus, and Martin Burney hinted at the Wandering Jew; but the last was set aside as spurious, and the first made over to the New World.

"I should like," says Mrs. Reynolds, "to have seen Pope talking with Patty Blount; and I *have* seen Goldsmith." Every one turned round to look at Mrs. Reynolds, as if by so doing they too could get a sight of Goldsmith.

"Where," asked a harsh croaking voice, "was Dr. Johnson in the years 1745–6? He did not write any thing that we know of, nor is there any account of him in Boswell during those two years. Was he in Scotland with the Pretender? He seems to have passed through the scenes in the Highlands in company with Boswell many years after "with lack-lustre eye," yet as if they were familiar to him, or associated in his mind with interests that he durst not explain. If so, it would be an additional reason for my liking him; and I would give something to have seen him seated in the tent with the youthful majesty of Britain, and penning the proclamation to all true subjects and adherents of the legitimate government."

"I thought," said A——, turning short round upon Lamb, "that you of the Lake School did not like Pope?" "Not like Pope! My dear sir, you must be under a mistake—I can read him over and over for ever!"—"Why certainly, the 'Essay on Man' must be allowed to be a masterpiece."—"It may be so, but I seldom look into it."—"Oh! then it's his Satires you admire?"—"No, not his Satires, but his friendly Epistles and his compliments."—"Compliments; I did not know he ever made any."—"The finest," said Lamb, "that were ever paid by the wit of man. Each of them is worth an estate for life—nay, is an immortality There is that superb one to Lord Cornbury:

'Despise low joys, low gains;
Disdain whatever Cornbury disdains;
Be virtuous, and be happy for your pains.'

Was there ever more artful insinuation of idolatrous praise? And then that noble apotheosis of his friend Lord Mansfield (however little deserved) when, speaking of the House of Lords, he adds—

'Conspicuous scene! another yet is nigh,
(More silent far) where kings and poets lie;
Where Murray (long enough his country's pride)
Shall be no more than Tully or than Hyde!'

And with what a fine turn of indignant flattery he addresses Lord Bolingbroke—

'Why rail they then, if but one wreath of mine,
Oh! all-accomplished St. John, deck thy shrine?'

Or turn," continued Lamb, with a slight hectic on his cheek and his eye glistening, "to his list of early friends·

> 'But why then publish ? Granville the polite,
> And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;
> Well-natured Garth inflamed with early praise,
> And Congreve loved and Swift endured my lays:
> The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,
> Even mitred Rochester would nod the head;
> And St. John's self (great Dryden's friend before)
> Received with open arms one poet more.
> Happy my studies, if by these approved!
> Happier their author, if by these beloved!
> From these the world will judge of men and books,
> Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks.' "

Here his voice totally failed him, and throwing down the book, he said, "Do you think I would not wish to have been friends with such a man as this?"

"What say you to Dryden?"—"He rather made a show of himself, and courted popularity in that lowest temple of Fame, a coffee-house, so as in some measure to vulgarize one's idea of him. Pope, on the contrary, reached the very *beau ideal* of what a poet's life should be; and his fame while living seemed to be an emanation from that which was to circle his name after death. He was so far enviable (and one would feel proud to have witnessed the rare spectacle in him) that he was almost the only poet and man of genius who met with his reward on this side of the tomb, who realized in friends, fortune, the esteem of the world, the most sanguine hopes of a youthful ambition, and who found that sort of patronage from the great during his lifetime which they would be thought anxious to bestow upon him after his death. Read Gray's verses to him on his supposed return from Greece, after his translation of Homer was finished, and say if you would not gladly join the bright procession that welcomed him home, or see it once more land at Whitehall stairs."—"Still," said Mrs. Reynolds, "I would rather have seen him talking with Patty Blount, or riding by in a coronet-coach with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu!"

Erasmus Phillips, who was deep in a game of piquet at the other end of the room, whispered to Martin Burney to ask if Junius would not be a fit person to invoke from the dead. "Yes," said Lamb, "provided he would agree to lay aside his mask."

We were now at a stand for a short time, when Fielding was mentioned as a candidate: only one, however, seconded the proposition. "Richardson?"—"By all means, but only to look at him through the glass-door of his back-shop, hard at work upon one of his novels (the most extraordinary contrast that ever was presented between an author and his works,) but not to let him come behind his counter lest he should want you to turn customer, nor to go up-stairs with him, lest he should offer to read the first manuscript of Sir Charles Grandison, which was originally written in eight-and-twenty volumes octavo, or get out the letters of his female correspondents, to prove that Joseph Andrews was low."

There was but one statesman in the whole English history that any one expressed the least desire to see—Oliver Cromwell, with his fine, frank, rough, pimply face, and wily policy;—and one enthusiast, John Bunyan, the immortal author of the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' It seemed that if he came into the room, dreams would follow him, and that each person would nod under his golden cloud, "nigh-sphered in Heaven," a canopy as strange and stately as any in Homer.

Of all persons near our own time, Garrick's name was received with the greatest enthusiasm, who was proposed by Baron Field. He presently superseded both Hogarth and Handel, who had been talked of, but then it was on condition that he should act in tragedy and comedy, in the play and farce, 'Lear' and 'Wildair' and 'Abel Drugger.' What a *sight for sore eyes* that would be! Who would not part with a year's income at least, almost with a year of his natural life, to be present at it? Besides, as he could not act alone, and recitations are unsatisfactory things, what a troop he must bring with him—the silver-tongued Barry, and Quin, and Shuter and Weston, and Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Pritchard, of whom I have heard my father speak as so great a favourite when he was young! This would indeed be a revival of the dead, the restoring of art; and so much the more desirable, as such is the lurking scepticism mingled with our overstrained admiration of past excellence, that though we have the speeches of Burke, the portraits of Reynolds, the writings of Goldsmith, and the conversation of Johnson, to show what people could do at that period, and to confirm the universal testimony to the merits of Garrick; yet, as it was before our time, we have our misgivings, as if he was probably after all little better than a Bartlemy-fair actor, dressed out to play Macbeth in a scarlet coat and laced cocked-hat. For one, I should like to have seen and heard with my own eyes and ears. Certainly, by all accounts, if any one was ever moved by the true histrionic *æstus*, it was Garrick. When he followed the Ghost in 'Hamlet,' he did not drop the sword, as most actors do, behind the scenes, but kept the point raised the whole way round, so fully was he possessed with the idea, or so anxious not to lose sight of his part for a moment. Once at a splendid dinner-party at Lord ——'s, they suddenly missed Garrick, and could not imagine what was become of him, till they were drawn to the window by the convulsive screams and peals of laughter of a young negro boy, who was rolling on the ground in an ecstacy of delight to see Garrick mimicking a turkey-cock in the court-yard, with his coat-tail stuck out behind, and in a seeming flutter of feathered rage and pride. Of our party only two persons present had seen the British Roscius; and they seemed as willing as the rest to renew their acquaintance with their old favourite.

We were interrupted in the hey-day and mid-career of this fanciful speculation, by a grumbler in a corner, who declared it was a shame to make all this rout about a mere player and farce-writer, to the neglect and exclusion of the fine old dramatists, the contemporaries and rivals of Shakespear. Lamb said he had anticipated this objection when he had named the author of 'Mustapha and Alaham;' and out of caprice insisted upon keeping him to represent the set, in preference to the wild hair-brained enthusiast Kit Marlowe; to the sexton of St. Ann's, Webster, with his melancholy yew-trees and death's-heads; to Deckar, who was but a garrulous proser; to the voluminous Heywood; and even to Beaumont and Fletcher, whom we might offend by complimenting the wrong author on their joint productions. Lord Brook, on the contrary, stood quite by himself, or in Cowley's words, was "a vast species alone." Some one hinted at the circumstance of his being a lord, which rather startled Lamb, but he said a *ghost* would perhaps dispense with strict etiquette, on being regularly addressed by his title. Ben Jonson divided our suffrages pretty equally. Some were afraid he would begin to traduce Shakespear, who was not present to defend himself. "If he grows disagreeable," it was whispered aloud, "there is Godwin can match him." At length, his romantic visit to Drummond of Hawthornden was mentioned, and turned the scale in his favor.

Lamb inquired if there was any one that was hanged that I would choose to mention? And I answered, Eugene Aram.* The name of the "Admirable Crichton" was suddenly started as a splendid example of *waste* talents, so different from the generality of his countrymen. This choice was mightily approved by a North-Briton present, who declared himself descended from that prodigy of learning and accomplishment, and said he had family plate in his possession as vouchers for the fact, with the initials A. C.—*Admirable Crichton!* Hunt laughed or rather roared as heartily at this as I should think he has done for many years.

The last-named Mitre-courtier† then wished to know whether there were any metaphysicians to whom one might be tempted to apply the wizard spell? I replied, there were only six in modern times deserving the name—Hobbes, Berkeley, Butler, Hartley, Hume, Leibnitz; and perhaps Jonathan Edwards, a Massachusetts man.‡ As to the French, who talked fluently of having *created* this science, there was not a tittle in any of their writings, that was not to be found literally in the authors I had mentioned. Horne [Horne Tooke, who might have a claim to come in under the head of Grammar, was still living.] None of these names seemed to excite much interest, and I did not plead for the re-appearance of those who might be thought best fitted by the abstracted nature of their studies for their present spiritual and disembodied state, and who, even while on this living stage, were nearly divested of common flesh and blood. As A—— with an uneasy fidgetty face was about to put some question about Mr. Locke and Dugald Stewart, he was prevented by Martin Burney, who observed, "If J—— was here, he would undoubtedly be for having up those profound and redoubted scholiasts, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus." I said this might be fair enough in him who had read or fancied he had read the original works, but I did not see how we could have any right to call up those authors to give an account of themselves in person, till we had looked into their writings.

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* See 'Newgate Calendar' for 1758.

† Lamb at this time occupied chambers in Mitre court, Fleet street.

‡ Lord Bacon is not included in this list, nor do I know where he should come in. It is not easy to make room for him and his reputation together. This great and celebrated man in some of his works recommends it to pour a bottle of claret into the ground of a morning, and to stand over it, inhaling the perfumes. So he sometimes enriched the dry and barren soil of speculation with the fine aromatic spirit of his genius. His 'Essays' and his 'Advancement of Learning,' are works of vast depth and scope of observation. The last, though it contains no positive discoveries, is a noble chart of the human intellect, and a guide to all future inquirers.

By this time it should seem that some rumor of our whimsical deliberation had got wind, and had disturbed the *irritabile genus* in their shadowy abodes, for we received messages from several candidates that we had just been thinking of. Gray declined our invitation, though he had not yet been asked: Gay offered to come and bring in his hand the Duchess of Bolton, the original Polly: Steel and Addison left their cards as Captain Sentry and Sir Roger de Coverley: Swift came in and sat down without speaking a word, and quitted the room as abruptly: Otway and Chatterton were seen lingering on the opposite side of the Styx, but could not muster enough between them to pay Charon his fare: Thomson fell asleep in the boat, and was rowed back again—and Burns sent a low fellow, one John Barleycorn, an old companion of his who had conducted him to the other world, to say that he had during his life-time been drawn out of his retirement as a show, only to be made an exciseman of, and that he would rather remain where he was. He desired, however, to shake hands by his representative—the hand, thus held out, was in a burning fever, and shook prodigiously.

The room was hung round with several portraits of eminent painters. While we were debating whether we should demand speech with these masters of mute eloquence, whose features were so familiar to us, it seemed that all at once they glided from their frames, and seated themselves at some little distance from us. There was Leonardo with his majestic beard and watchful eye, having a bust of Archimedes before him; next him was Raphael's graceful head turned round to the Fornarina; and on his other side was Lucretia Borgia, with calm, golden locks; Michael Angelo had placed the model of St. Peter's on the table before him; Correggio had an angel at his side; Titian was seated with his Mistress between himself and Giorgioni; Guido was accompanied by his own Aurora, who took a dice-box from him; Claude held a mirror in his hand; Rubens patted a beautiful panther (led in by a satyr) on the head; Vandyke appeared as his own Paris, and Rembrandt was hid under furs, gold chains, and jewels, which Sir Joshua eyed closely, holding his hand so as to shade his forehead. Not a word was spoken; and as we rose to do them homage, they still presented the same surface to the view. Not being *bonâ fide* representations of living people, we got rid of the splendid apparitions by signs and dumb show. As soon as they had melted into thin air, there was a loud noise at the outer door, and we found it was Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio, who had been raised from the dead by their earnest desire to see their illustrious successors—

> "Whose names on earth
> In Fame's eternal records live for aye!"

Finding them gone, they had no ambition to be seen after them, and mournfully withdrew. "Egad!" said Lamb, "those are the very fellows I should like to have had some talk with, to know how they could see to paint when all was dark around them?"

"But shall we have nothing to say," interrogated G. J——, "to the Legend of Good Women?"—"Name, name, Mr. J——," cried Hunt in a boisterous tone of friendly exultation, "name as many as you please, without reserve or fear of molestation!" J—— was perplexed between so many amiable recollections, that the name of the lady of his choice expired in a pensive whiff of his pipe; and Lamb impatiently declared for the Duchess of Newcastle. Mrs. Hutchinson was no sooner mentioned, than she carried the day from the Duchess. We were the less solicitous on this subject of filling up the posthumous lists of Good Women, as there was already one in the room as good, as sensible, and in all respects as exemplary, as the best of them could be for their lives! "I should like vastly to have seen Ninon de l'Enclos," said that incomparable person; and this immediately puts us in mind that we had neglected to pay honour due to our friends on the other side of the Channel: Voltaire, the patriarch of levity, and Rousseau, the father of sentiment, Montaigne and Rabelais (great in wisdom and in wit), Molière and that illustrious group that are collected round him (in the print of that subject) to hear him read his comedy of the 'Tartuffe' at the house of Ninon; Racine, La Fontaine, Rochefoucault, St. Evremont, &c.

"There is one person," said a shrill, querulous voice, "I would rather see than all these—Don Quixote!"

"Come, come!" said Hunt, "I thought we should have no heroes, real or fabulous. What say you, Mr. Lamb? Are you for eking out your shadowy list with such names as Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Tamerlane, or Ghenghis Khan?"—"Excuse me," said Lamb; "on the subject of characters in active life, plotters and disturbers of the world, I have a crotchet of my own, which I beg leave to reserve."—"No, no! come, out with your worthies!"—"What do you think of Guy Fawkes and Judas Iscariot?" Hunt turned an eye upon him like a wild Indian, but cordial and full of smothered glee. "Your most exquisite reason!" was echoed on all sides; and A—— thought that Lamb had now fairly entangled himself. "Why, I cannot but think," retorted he of the wistful countenance, "that Guy Fawkes, that poor, fluttering annual scare-crow of straw and rags, is an ill-used gentleman. I would give something to see him sitting pale and emaciated, surrounded by his matches and his barrels of gunpowder, and expecting the moment that was to transport him to Paradise for his heroic self-devotion; but if I say any more, there is that fellow Godwin will make something of it. And as to Judas Iscariot, my reason is different. I would fain see the face of him, who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the Son of Man, could afterwards betray him. I have no conception of such a thing; nor have I ever seen any picture (not even Leonardo's very fine one) that gave me the least idea of it."—"You have said enough, Mr. Lamb, to justify your choice."

"Oh! ever right, Menenius,—ever right!"

"There is only one other person I can ever think of after this," continued Lamb; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. "If Shakespear was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment!"

As a lady present seemed now to get uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken, we rose up to go. The morning broke with that dim, dubious light by which Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio must have seen to paint their earliest works; and we parted to meet again and renew similar topics at night, the next night, and the night after that, till that night overspread Europe which saw no dawn. The same event, in truth, broke up our little Congress that broke up the great one. But that was to meet again: our deliberations have never been resumed

ESSAY XXIX.

The Shyness of Scholars.

"And of his port as meek as is a maid."

Scholars lead a contemplative and retired life, both which circumstances must be supposed to contribute to the effect in question. A life of study is also conversant with high and *ideal* models, which gives an ambitious turn to the mind; and pride is nearly akin to delicacy of feeling.

That a life of privacy and obscurity should render its votaries bashful and awkward, or unfit them for the routine of society, from the want both of a habit of going into company and from ignorance of its usages, is obvious to remark. No one can be expected to do that well or without a certain degree of hesitation and restraint, which he is not accustomed to do except on particular occasions, and at rare intervals. You might as rationally set a scholar or a clown on a tight-rope and expect them to dance gracefully and with every appearance of ease, as introduce either into the gay, laughing circle, and suppose that he will acquit himself handsomely and come off with applause in the retailing of anecdote or the interchange of repartee. "If you have not seen the Court, your manners must be naught; and if your manners are naught, you must be damned," according to Touchstone's reasoning. The other cause lies rather deeper, and is so far better worth considering, perhaps. A student, then, that is, a man who condemns himself to toil for a length of time and through a number of volumes in order to arrive at a conclusion, naturally loses that smartness and ease which distinguish the gay and thoughtless rattler. There is a certain elasticity of movement and hey-day of the animal spirits seldom to be met with but in those who have never cared for any thing beyond the moment, or looked lower than the surface. The scholar having to encounter doubts and difficulties on all hands, and indeed to apply by way of preference to those subjects which are most beset with mystery, becomes hesitating, sceptical, irresolute, absent, dull. All the processes of his mind are slow, cautious, circuitous, instead of being prompt, heedless, straight-forward. Finding the intricacies of the path increase upon him in every direction, this can hardly be supposed to add to the lightness of his step, the confidence of his brow as he advances. He does not skim the surface, but dives under it like the mole to make his way darkling, by imperceptible degrees and throwing up heaps of dirt and rubbish over his head to track his progress. He is therefore startled at any sudden light, puzzled by any casual question, taken unawares and at a disadvantage in every critical emergency. He must have time given him to collect his thoughts, to consider objections to make farther inquiries, and come to no conclusion at last.

This is very different from the dashing, *off-hand* manner of the mere man of business or fashion; and he who is repeatedly found in situations to which he is unequal (particularly if he is of a reflecting and candid temper) will be apt to look foolish, and to lose both his countenance and his confidence in himself—at least as to the opinion others entertain of him, and the figure he is likely on any occasion to make in the eyes of the world. The course of his studies has not made him wise, but has taught him the uncertainty of wisdom; and has supplied him with excellent reasons for suspending his judgment, when another would throw the casting-weight of his own presumption or interest into the scale.

The inquirer after truth learns to take nothing for granted; least of all, to make an assumption of his own superior merits He would have nothing proceed without proper proofs and an exact scrutiny; and would neither be imposed upon himself, nor impose upon others by shallow and hasty appearances. It takes years of patient toil and devoted enthusiasm to master any art or science; and, after all, the success is doubtful. He infers that other triumphs must be prepared in like manner at an humble distance: he cannot bring himself to imagine that any object worth seizing on or deserving of regard, can be carried by a *coup de main.* So far from being proud or puffed up by them, he would be ashamed and degraded in his own opinion by any advantages that were to be obtained by such cheap and vulgar means as putting a good face on the matter, as strutting and vapouring about his own pretensions. He would not place himself on a level with bullies or coxcombs; nor believe that those whose favour he covets, can be the dupes of either. Whatever is excellent in his fanciful creed is hard of attainment; and he would (perhaps absurdly enough) have the means in all cases answerable to the end. He knows that there are difficulties in his favourite pursuits to puzzle the will, to tire the patience, to unbrace the strongest nerves, and make the stoutest courage quail; and he would fain think that if there is any object more worthy than another to call forth the earnest solicitude, the hopes and fears of a wise man, and to make his heart yearn within him at the most distant prospect of success, this precious prize in the grand lottery of life is not to be had for the asking for, or from the mere easy indifference or overbearing effrontery with which you put in your claim. He is aware that it will be long enough before any one paints a fine picture by walking up and down and admiring himself in the glass; or writes a fine poem by being delighted with the sound of his own voice; or solves a single problem in philosophy by swaggering and haughty airs. He conceives that it is the same with the way of the world—woos the fair as he woos the Muse; in conversation, never puts in a word till he has something better to say than any one else in the room; in business, never strikes while the iron is hot, and flings away all his advantages by endeavouring to prove to his own and the satisfaction of others, that he is clearly entitled to them. It never once enters into his head (till it is too late) that impudence is the current coin in the affairs of life; that he who doubts his own merit, never has credit given him by others; that Fortune does not stay to have her overtures canvassed; that he who neglects opportunity, can seldom command it a second time; that the world judge by appearances, not by realities; and that they sympathize more readily with those who are prompt to do themselves justice, and to show off their various qualifications or enforce their pretensions to the utmost, than with those who wait for others to award their claims, and carry their fastidious refinement into helplessness and imbecility. Thus "fools rush in where angels fear to tread;" and modest merit finds to its cost, that the bold hand and dauntless brow succeed where timidity and bashfulness are pushed aside; that the gay, laughing eye is preferred to dejection and gloom, health and animal spirits to the shattered, sickly frame and trembling nerves; and that to succeed in life, a man should carry about with him the outward and incontrovertible signs of success, and of his satisfaction with himself and his prospects, instead of plaguing every body near him with fantastical scruples and his ridiculous anxiety to realize an unattainable standard of perfection. From holding back himself, the speculative enthusiast is thrust back by others: his pretensions are insulted and trampled on; and the repeated and pointed repulses he meets with, make him still more unwilling to encounter, and more unable to contend, with those that await him in the prosecution of his career. He therefore retires from the contest altogether, or remains in the back-ground, a passive but uneasy spectator of a scene in which he finds from experience, that confidence, alertness, and superficial acquirements are of more avail than all the refinement and delicacy in the world.

Action, in truth, is referable chiefly to quickness and strength of resolution, rather than to depth of reasoning or scrupulous nicety: again, it is to be presumed that those who show a popular reliance on themselves, will not betray the trust we place in them through pusillanimity or want of spirit: in what relates to the opinion of others, which is often formed hastily and on slight acquaintance, much must be allowed to what strikes the senses, to what excites the imagination; and in all popular worldly schemes, popular and worldly means must be resorted to, instead of depending wholly on the hidden and intrinsic merits of the case.

> "In peace, there's nothing so becomes a man
> As modest stillness, and humility:
> But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
> Then imitate the action of the tiger;
> Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
> Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage:

> Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;
> Let it pry through the portage of the head,
> Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it,
> As fearfully as doth a galled rock
> O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
> Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean."

This advice (sensible as it is) is abhorrent to the nature of a man who is accustomed to place all his hopes of victory in reasoning and reflection only. The noisy, rude, gratuitous success of those who have taken so much less pains to deserve it disgusts and disheartens him—he loses his self-possession and self-esteem, has no standard left by which to measure himself or others, and as he cannot be brought to admire them, persuades himself at last that the blame rests with himself; and instead of bespeaking a fashionable dress, learning to bow, or taking a few lessons in boxing or fencing to brace his nerves or raise his spirits, aggravates all his former faults by way of repairing them, grows more jealous of the propriety of every word and look, lowers his voice into a whisper, gives his style the last polish, reconsiders his arguments till they evaporate in a sigh, and thus satisfies himself that he can hardly fail; that men judge impartially in the end, that the public will sooner or later do him justice, Fortune smile, and the Fair no longer be averse! *Oh malore!* He is just where he was, or ten times worse off than ever.

There is another circumstance that tends not a little to perplex the judgment, and add to the difficulties of the retired student, when he comes out into the world. He is like one dropped from the clouds. He has hitherto conversed chiefly with historic personages and abstract propositions, and has no just notion of actual men and things. He does not well know how to reconcile the sweeping conclusions he has been taught to indulge in to the cautious and pliant maxims of the world, nor how to compare himself, an inhabitant of Utopia, with sublunary mortals. He has been habituated all his life to look up to a few great names handed down by virtue or science as the "gods of his idolatry," as the fixed stars in the firmament of reputation, and to have some respect for himself and other learned men as votaries at the shrine and as appreciating the merits of their idol; but all the rest of the world, who are neither the objects of this sort of homage, nor concerned as a sort of priesthood in collecting and paying it, he looks upon as actually nobody, or as worms crawling upon the face of the earth without intellectual value or pretensions. He is, therefore, a little surprised and shocked to find, when he deigns to mingle with his fellows, those every-day mortals, on ordinary terms, that they are of a height nearly equal to himself, that they have words, ideas, feelings in common with the best, and are not the mere cyphers he had been led to consider them. From having under-rated he comes to over-rate them. Having dreamt of no such thing, he is more struck with what he finds than perhaps it deserves; magnifies the least glimpse of sense or humour into sterling wit or wisdom; is startled by any objection from so unexpected a quarter; thinks his own advantages of no avail, because they are not the only ones; and shrinks from an encounter with weapons he has not been used to, and from a struggle by which he feels himself degraded. The Knight of La Mancha, when soundly beaten by the packstaves of the Yanguesian carriers, laid all the blame on his having condescended to fight with plebeians. The pride of learning comes in to aid the awkwardness and bashfulness of the inexperienced novice, converting his want of success into the shame and mortification of defeat in what he habitually considers as a contest with inferiors. Indeed, those will always be found to submit with the worst grace to any check or reverse of this kind in common conversation or reasoning, who have been taught to set the most exclusive and disproportioned value on letters: and the most enlightened and accomplished scholars will be less likely to be humbled or put to the blush by the display of common sense or native talent, than the more ignorant, self-sufficient, and pedantic among the learned; for that ignorance, self-sufficiency, and pedantry, are sometimes to be reckoned among the attributes of learning, cannot be disputed. These qualities are not very reconcilable with modest merit; but they are quite consistent with a great deal of blundering, confusion, and want of *tact* in the commerce of the world. The genuine scholar retires from an unequal conflict from silence and obscurity: the pedant swells into self-importance, and renders himself conspicuous by pompous arrogance and absurdity!

It is hard upon those who have ever taken pains or done any thing to distinguish themselves, that they are seldom the trumpeters of their own achievements; and I believe it may be laid down as a rule, that we receive just as much homage from others as we exact from them by our own declarations, looks, and manner. But no one who has performed any thing great looks big upon it: those who have any thing to boast of are generally silent on that head, and altogether shy of the subject. With Coriolanus, they "will not have their nothings monster'd." From familiarity, his own acquirements do not appear so extraordinary to the individual as to others; and there is a natural want of sympathy in this respect. No one who is really capable of great things is proud or vain of his success; for he thinks more of what he had hoped or has failed to do, than of what he has done. A habit of extreme exertion, or of anxious suspense, is not one of buoyant, overweening self-complacency: those who have all their lives tasked their faculties to the utmost, may be supposed to have quite enough to do without having much disposition left to anticipate their success with confidence, or to glory in it afterwards. The labours of the mind, like the drudgery of the body, depress and take away the usual alacrity of the spirits. Nor can such persons be lifted up with the event; for the impression of the consequences to result from any arduous undertaking must be light and vain, compared with the toil and anxiety accompanying it. It is only those who have done nothing, who fancy they can do every thing; or who have leisure and inclination to admire themselves. To sit before a glass and smile delighted at our own image, is merely a tax on our egotism and self-conceit; and these are resources not easily exhausted in some persons; or if they are, the deficiency is supplied by flatterers, who surround the vain like a natural atmosphere. Fools who take all their opinions at second-hand cannot resist the coxcomb's delight in himself: or it might be said that folly is the natural mirror of vanity.

The greatest heroes, it has often been observed, do not show it in their faces; nor do philosophers affect to be thought wise. Little minds triumph on small occasions, or over puny competitors: the loftiest wish for higher opportunities of signalizing themselves, or compare themselves with those models that leave them no room for flippant exultation. Either great things are accomplished with labour and pains, which stamp their impression on the general character and tone of feeling; or if this should not be the case (as sometimes happens), and they are the effect of genius and a happiness of nature, then they cost too little to be much thought of, and we rather wonder at others for admiring them, than at ourselves for having performed them. "Vix ea nostra voco"—is the motto of spontaneous talent; and in neither case is conceit the exuberant growth of great original power or of great attainments.

In one particular, the uneducated man carries it hollow against the man of thought and refinement: the first can shoot in the *long bow*, which the last cannot for the life of him. He who has spent the best part of his time and wasted his best powers in endeavouring to answer the question, "What is truth?"—scorns a lie, and every thing making the smallest approach to one. His mind by habit has become tenacious of, devoted to the truth. The grossness and vulgarity of falsehood shock the delicacy of his perceptions, as much as it would shock the finest artist to be obliged to daub in a sign-post, or scrawl a caricature. He cannot make up his mind to derive any benefit from so pitiful and disgusting a source. Tell me that a man is a metaphysician, and at the same time that he is given to shallow and sordid boasting, and I will not believe you. After striving to raise himself to an equality with truth and nature by patient investigation and refined distinctions (which few can make)—whether he succeed or fail, he cannot stoop to acquire a spurious reputation, or to advance himself or lessen others by paltry artifice and idle rhodomontade, which are in every one's power who has never known the value or undergone the labour of discovering a single truth. Gross personal and local interests bear the principal sway with the ignorant or mere man of the world, who considers not what things are in themselves, but what they are to him: the man of science attaches a higher importance to, because he finds a more constant pleasure in the contemplation and pursuit of general and abstracted truths. Philosophy also teaches self-knowledge; and self-knowledge strikes equally at the root of any inordinate opinion of ourselves, or wish to impress others with idle admiration. Mathematicians have been remarked for persons of strict probity and a conscientious and somewhat literal turn of mind.* But are poets and romance-writers equally scrupulous and severe judges of themselves, and martyrs to right principle? I cannot acquit them of the charge of vanity, and a wish to aggrandize themselves in the eyes of the world, at the expense of a little false complaisance (what wonder when the world are so prone to admire, and they are so spoiled by indulgence in self-pleasing fancies?)—but in general they are too much taken up with their *ideal* creations, which have also a truth and keeping of their own, to misrepresent or exaggerate matters of fact, or to trouble their heads about them. The poet's waking thoughts are dreams: the liar has all his wits and senses about him, and thinks only of astonishing his hearers by some worthless assertion, a mixture of impudence and cunning. But what shall we say of the clergy and the priests of all countries? Are they not men of learning? And are they not, with few exceptions, noted for imposture and time-serving, much more than for a love of truth and candour? They are good subjects, it is true; bound to keep the peace, and hired to maintain certain opinions, not to inquire into them. So this is an exception to the rule, such as might be expected. I speak of the natural tendencies of things, and not of the false bias that may be given to them by their forced combination with other principles.

The worst effect of this depression of spirits, or of the "scholar's melancholy," here spoken of, is when it leads a man, from a distrust of himself, to seek for low company, or to forget it by matching below himself. Gray is to be pitied, whose extra diffidence or fastidiousness was such as to prevent his associating with his fellow-collegians, or mingling with the herd, till at length, like the owl, shutting himself up from society and daylight, he was hunted and hooted at like the owl whenever he chanced to appear, and was even assailed and disturbed in the haunts in which "he held his solitary reign." He was driven from college to college, and subjected to a persecution the more harrassing to a person of his indolent and retired habits. But he only shrunk the more within himself in consequence—read over his favourite authors—corresponded with his distant friends—was terrified out of his wits at the bare idea of having his portrait prefixed to his works—and probably died from nervous agitation at the publicity into which his name had been forced by his learning, taste, and genius. This monastic seclusion and reserve is, however, better than a career such as Porson's; who from not liking the restraints, or not possessing the exterior recommendations of good society, addicted himself to the lowest indulgences, spent his days and nights in cider-cellars and pothouses, cared not with whom or where he was, so that he had somebody to talk to and something to drink, "from humble porter to imperial tokay" (*a liquid*, according to his own pun,) and fell a martyr, in all likelihood, to what in the first instance was pure *mauvaise honte*. Nothing could overcome this propensity to low society and sotting, but the having something to do which required his whole attention and faculties; and then he shut himself up for weeks together in his chambers, or at the University, to collate old manuscripts, or edite a Greek tragedy, or expose a grave pedant, without seeing a single boon-companion, or touching a glass of wine. I saw him once at the London Institution with a large patch of coarse brown paper on his nose, the skirts of his rusty black coat hung with cobwebs, and talking in a tone of suavity, approaching to condescension, to one of the managers.

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* I have heard it said that carpenters, who do every thing by the square and line, are honest men, and I am willing to suppose it. Shakespear, in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," makes Snug the Joiner the *moral* man of the piece.

It is a pity that men should so lose themselves from a certain awkwardness and rusticity at the outset. But did not Sheridan make the same melancholy ending, and run the same fatal career, though in a higher and more brilliant circle? He did; and though not from exactly the same cause (for no one could accuse Sheridan's purple nose and flashing eye of a bashfulness—"modest as morning when she coldly eyes the youthful Phœbus!")—yet it was perhaps from one nearly allied to it, namely, the want of that noble independence and confidence in its own resources which should distinguish genius, and the dangerous ambition to get sponsors and vouchers for it in persons of rank and fashion. The affectation of the society of lords is as mean and low-minded as the love of that of coblers and tapsters. It is that coblers and tapsters may admire, that we wish to be seen in company of *their* betters. The tone of literary patronage is better than it was a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago. What dramatic author would think now of getting a lady of quality to take a box at the first night of a play to prevent its being damned by the pit? Do we not read the account of Parson Adams taking his ale in Squire Booby's kitchen with mingled incredulity and shame? At present literature has, to a considerable degree, found its level, and is hardly in danger, "deprived of its natural patrons and protectors, the great and noble, of being trodden in the mire, and trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude"—though it can never again hope to be what learning once was in the persons of the priesthood, the lord and sovereign of principalities and powers. Fool that it was ever to forego its privileges, and loosen the strong hold it had on opinion in bigotry and superstition!

I remember hearing a lady of great sense and acuteness speak of it as a painful consequence of the natural shyness of scholars, that from the want of a certain address, or an acquaintance with the common forms of society, they despair of making themselves agreeable to women of education and a certain rank in life, and throw away their fine sentiments and romantic tenderness on chambermaids and mantua-makers. Not daring to hope for success where it would be most desirable, yet anxious to realize in some way the dream of books and of their youth, they are willing to accept a return of affection which they count upon as a tribute of gratitude in those of lower circumstances (as if gratitude were ever bought by interest,) and take up with the first Dulcinea del Toboso that they meet with, when, would they only try the experiment, they might do much better. Perhaps so: but there is here also a mixture of pride as well as modesty. The scholar is not only apprehensive of not meeting with a return of fondness where it might be most advantageous to him, but he is afraid of subjecting his self-love to the mortification of a repulse, and to the reproach of aiming at a prize far beyond his deserts. Besides, living (as he does) in an *ideal* world, he has it in his option to clothe his Goddess (be she who or what she may,) with all the perfections his heart dotes on; and he works up a dowdy of this ambiguous description *à son gré*, as an artist does a piece of dull clay, or the poet the sketch of some unrivalled heroine. The contrast is also the greater (and not the less gratifying as being his own discovery) between his favourite figure and the background of her original circumstances; and he likes her the better, inasmuch as, like himself, she owes all to her own merit—and *his* notice!

Possibly, the best cure for this false modesty, and for the uneasiness and extravagances it occasions, would be for the retired and abstracted student to consider that he properly belongs to another sphere of action, remote from the scenes of ordinary life, and may plead the excuse of ignorance, and the privilege granted to strangers and to those who do not speak the same language. If any one is travelling in a foreign diligence, he is not expected to shine nor to put himself forward, nor need he be out of countenance because he cannot: he has only to conform as well as he can to his new and temporary situation, and to study common propriety and simplicity of manners. Every thing has its own limits, a little centre of its own, round which it moves; so that our true wisdom lies in keeping to our own walk in life, however humble or obscure, and being satisfied if we can succeed in it. The best of us can do no more, and we shall only become ridiculous or unhappy by attempting it. We are ashamed, because we are at a loss in things to which we have no pretensions, and try to remedy our mistakes by committing greater. An overweening vanity or self-opinion is, in truth, often at the bottom of this weakness; and we shall be most likely to conquer the one by eradicating the other, or restricting it within due and moderate bounds.

ESSAY XXX.

On Old English Writers and Speakers.

When I see a whole row of standard French authors piled up on a Paris book-stall, to the height of twenty or thirty volumes, showing their mealy coats to the sun, pink, blue, and yellow, they seem to me a wall built up to keep out the intrusion of foreign letters. There is scarcely such a thing as an English book to be met with, unless, perhaps, a dusty edition of Clarissa Harlowe lurks in an obscure corner, or a volume of the Sentimental Journey perks its well-known title in your face.* But there is a huge column of Voltaire's works complete in sixty volumes, another (not so frequent) of Rousseau's in fifty, Racine in ten volumes, Molière in about the same number, La Fontaine, Marmontel, Gil Blas, for ever; Madame Sevigné's Letters, Pascal, Montesquieu, Crebillon, Marivaux, with Montaigne, Rabelais, and the grand Corneille more rare; and eighteen full-sized volumes of La Harpe's criticism, towering vain-gloriously in the midst of them, furnishing the streets of Paris with a graduated scale of merit for all the rest, and teaching the very *garçons perruquiers* how to measure the length of each act of each play by a stop-watch, and to ascertain whether the angles at the four corners of each classic volume are right ones. How climb over this lofty pile of taste and elegance to wander down into the bogs and wastes of English or of any other literature, "to this obscure and wild?" Must they "on that fair mountain leave to feed, to batten on this moor?" Or why should they? Have they not literature enough of their own, and to spare, without coming to us? Is not the public mind crammed, choaked with French books, pictures, statues, plays, operas, newspapers, parties, and an incessant farrago of words, so that it has not a moment left to look at home into itself, or abroad into nature? Must they cross the Channel to increase the vast stock of impertinence, to acquire foreign tastes, suppress native prejudices, and reconcile the opinions of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews? It is quite needless. There is a project at present entertained in certain circles, to give the French a taste for Shakespear. They should really begin with the English.* Many of their own best authors are neglected; others, of whom new editions have been printed, lie heavy on the booksellers' hands. It is by an especial dispensation of Providence that languages wear out; as otherwise we should be buried alive under a load of books and knowledge. People talk of a philosophical and universal language. We have enough to do to understand our own, and to read a thousandth part (perhaps not the best) of what is written in it. It is ridiculous and monstrous vanity. We would set up a standard of general taste and of immortal renown; we would have the benefits of science and of art universal, because we suppose our own capacity to receive them unbounded; and we would have the thoughts of others never die, because we flatter ourselves that our own will last for ever; and like the frog imitating the ox in the fable, we burst in the vain attempt. Man, whatever he may think, is a very limited being; the world is a narrow circle drawn about him; the horizon limits our immediate view; immortality means a century or two. Languages happily restrict the mind to what is of its own native growth and fitted for it, as rivers and mountains bound countries; or the empire of learning, as well as states, would become unwieldly and overgrown.

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* A splendid edition of Goldsmith has been lately got up under the superintendence of Mr. Washington Irving, with a preface and a portrait of each author. By what concatenation of ideas that gentleman arrived at the necessity of placing his own portrait before a collection of Goldsmith's works, one must have been early imprisoned in transatlantic solitudes to understand.

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* I would as soon try to remove one side of the Seine or of the Thames to the other. By the time an author begins to be much talked of abroad, he is going out of fashion at home. We have many little Lord Byrons among ourselves, who think they can write nearly, if not quite as well. I am not anxious to spread Shakespear's fame, or to increase the number of his admirers. "What's he that wishes for more men from England?" &c. It is enough if he is admired by all those who understand him. He may be very inferior to many French writers, for what I know; but I am quite sure he is superior to all English ones. We may say that, without national prejudice or vanity

A little importation from foreign markets may be good; but the home production is the chief thing to be looked to.

"The proper study of the *French* is *French!*"

No people can act more uniformly upon a conviction of this maxim, and in that respect I think they are much to be commended.

Mr. Lamb has lately taken it into his head to read St. Evremont, and works of that stamp. I neither praise nor blame him for it. He observed, that St. Evremont was a writer half-way between Montaigne and Voltaire, with a spice of the wit of the one and the sense of the other. I said I was always of opinion that there had been a great many clever people in the world, both in France and England, but I had been sometimes rebuked for it. Lamb took this as a slight reproach; for he has been a little exclusive and national in his tastes. He said that Coleridge had lately given up all his opinions respecting German literature, that all their high-flown pretensions were in his present estimate sheer cant and affectation, and that none of their works were worth any thing but Schiller's and the early ones of Goëthe. "What," I said, "my old friend Werter! How many battles have I had in my own mind, and compunctious visitings of criticism to stick to my old favourite, because Coleridge thought nothing of it! It is hard to find one's-self right at last!" I found they were of my mind with respect to the celebrated Faust—that it is a mere piece of abortive perverseness, a wilful evasion of the subject and omission of the characters; that it is written on the absurd principle that as to produce a popular and powerful effect is not a proof of the highest genius, so to produce no effect at all is an evidence of the highest poetry—and in fine, that the German play is not to be named in a day with Marlowe's. Poor Kit! How Lord Byron would have sneered at this comparison between the boasted modern and a contemporary of Shakespear's! Captain Medwin or his Lordship must have made a mistake in the enumeration of plays of that period still acted. There is one of Ben Jonson's, "Every Man in his Humour;" and one of Massinger's, "A New Way to Pay Old Debts;" but there is none of Ford's either acted or worth acting, except "'Tis Pity She's a Whore," and that would no more bear acting than Lord Byron and Goëthe together could have written it.

This account of Coleridge's vacillations of opinion on such subjects might be adduced to show that our love for foreign literature is an acquired or rather an assumed taste; that it is, like a foreign religion, adopted for the moment, to answer a purpose or to please an idle humour; that we do not enter into the *dialect* of truth and nature in their works as we do in our own; and that consequently our taste for them seldom becomes a part of ourselves, that "grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength," and only quits us when we die. Probably it is this acquaintance with, and pretended admiration of, extraneous models, that adulterates and spoils our native literature, that polishes the surface but undermines its basis, and by taking away its original simplicity, character, and force, makes it just tolerable to others, and a matter of much indifference to ourselves. When I see Lord Byron's poems stuck all over Paris, it strikes me as ominous of the decline of English genius: on the contrary, when I find the Scotch novels in still greater request, I think it augurs well for the improvement of French taste.*

There was advertised not long ago in Paris an Elegy on the Death of Lord Byron, by his friend Sir Thomas More,—evidently confounding the living bard with the old statesman. It is thus the French in their light, salient way transpose every thing. The mistake is particularly ludicrous to those who have ever seen

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* I have heard the popularity of Sir Walter Scott in France ingeniously and somewhat whimsically traced to Bonaparte. He did not like the dissipation and frivolity of Paris, and relegated the country-gentlemen to their seats for eight months in the year. Here they yawn and gasp for breath, and would not know what to do without the aid of the author of Waverley. They ask impatiently when the "Tales of the Crusaders" will be out; and what you think of "Red-Gauntlet?" To the same cause is to be attributed the change of manners. *Messieurs, je veux des mœurs*, was constantly in the French Ruler's mouth. Manners, according to my informant, were necessary to consolidate his plans of tyranny;—how, I do not know. Forty years ago no man was ever seen in company with *Madame sa femme.* A comedy was written on the *ridicule* of a man being in love with his wife. Now he must be with her three-and-twenty hours out of the four-and-twenty; it is from this that they date the decline of happiness in France; and the unfortunate couple endeavour to pass the time and get rid of *ennui* as well as they can, by reading the Scotch novels together.

Mr. Moore, or Mr. Shee's portrait of him in Mr. Hookham's shop, and who chance to see Holbein's head of Sir Thomas More in the Louvre. There is the same difference that there is between a surly English mastiff and a little lively French pug. Mr. Moore's face is gay and smiling enough, old Sir Thomas's is severe, not to say sour. It seems twisted awry with difficult questions, and bursting asunder with a ponderous load of meaning. Mr. Moore has nothing of this painful and puritanical cast. He floats idly and fantastically on the top of the literature of his age; his renowned and almost forgotten namesake has nearly sunk to the bottom of his. The author of Utopia was no flincher, he was a martyr to his opinions, and was burnt to death for them—the most heroic action of Mr. Moore's life is, the having burnt the Memoirs of his friend!

The expression in Holbein's pictures conveys a faithful but not very favourable notion of the literary character of that period. It is painful, dry, and laboured. Learning was then an ascetic, but recluse and profound. You see a weight of thought and care in the studious heads of the time of the Reformation, a sincerity, an integrity, a sanctity of purpose, like that of a formal dedication to a religious life, or the inviolability of monastic vows. They had their work to do; we reap the benefits of it. We skim the surface, and travel along the high road. They had to explore dark recesses, to dig through mountains, and make their way through pathless wildernesses. It is no wonder they looked grave upon it. The seriousness, indeed, amounts to an air of devotion; and it has to me something fine, manly, and *old English* about it. There is a heartiness and determined resolution; a willingness to contend with opposition; a superiority to ease and pleasure; some sullen pride, but no trifling vanity. They addressed themselves to study as to a duty, and were ready to "leave all and follow it." In the beginning of such an era, the difference between ignorance and learning, between what was commonly known and what was possible to be known, would appear immense; and no pains or time would be thought too great to master the difficulty. Conscious of their own deficiencies and the scanty information of those about them, they would be glad to look out for aids and support, and to put themselves apprentices to time and nature.

This temper would lead them to exaggerate rather than to make light of the difficulties of their undertaking; and would call forth sacrifices in proportion. Feeling how little they knew, they would be anxious to discover all that others had known, and instead of making a display of themselves, their first object would be to dispel the mist and darkness that surrounded them. They did not cull the flowers of learning, or pluck a leaf of laurel for their own heads, but tugged at the roots and very heart of their subject, as the woodman tugs at the roots of the gnarled oak. The sense of the arduousness of their enterprize braced their courage, so that they left nothing half done. They inquired *de omne scibile et quibusdam aliis*. They ransacked libraries, they exhausted authorities. They acquired languages, consulted books, and decyphered manuscripts. They devoured learning, and swallowed antiquity whole, and (what is more) digested it. They read incessantly, and remembered what they read, from the zealous interest they took in it. Repletion is only bad, when it is accompanied with apathy and want of exercise. They laboured hard, and showed great activity both of reasoning and speculation. Their fault was that they were too prone to unlock the secrets of nature with the key of learning, and often to substitute authority in the place of argument. They were also too polemical; as was but naturally to be expected in the first breaking up of established prejudices and opinions. It is curious to observe the slow progress of the human mind in loosening and getting rid of its trammels, link by link, and how it crept on its hands and feet, and with its eyes bent on the ground, out of the cave of Bigotry, making its way through one dark passage after another; those who gave up one half of an absurdity contending as strenuously for the remaining half, the lazy current of tradition stemming the tide of innovation, and making an endless struggle between the two. But in the dullest minds of this period there was a deference to the opinions of their leaders; an imposing sense of the importance of the subject, of the necessity of bringing all the faculties to bear upon it; a weight either of armour or of internal strength, a zeal either *for* or *against;* a head, a heart, and a hand, a holding out to the death for conscience sake, a strong spirit of proselytism—no flippancy, no indifference, no compromising, no pert shallow scepticism, but truth was supposed indissolubly knit to good, knowledge to usefulness, and the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind to hang in the balance. The pure springs of a lofty faith (so to speak) had not then descended by various gradations from their skyey regions and cloudy height, to find their level in the smooth, glittering expanse of modern philosophy, or to settle in the stagnant pool of stale hypocrisy! A learned man of that day, if he knew no better than others, at least knew all that they did. He did not come to his subject, like some dapper barrister who has never looked at his brief, and trusts to the smartness of his wit and person for the agreeable effect he means to produce, but like an old and practised counsellor, covered over with the dust and cobwebs of the law. If it was a speaker in Parliament, he came prepared to handle his subject, armed with cases and precedents, the constitution and history of Parliament from the earliest period, a knowledge of the details of business and the local interests of the country; in short, he had taken up *the freedom of the House*, and did not treat the question like a cosmopolite, or a writer in a Magazine. If it were a divine, he knew the Scriptures and the Fathers, and the Councils and the Commentators by heart, and thundered them in the ears of his astonished audience. Not a trim essay or a tumid oration, patronizing religion by modern sophisms, but the Law and the Prophets, the chapter and the verse. If it was a philosopher, Aristotle and the Schoolmen were drawn out in battle-array against you:—if an antiquarian, the Lord bless us! There is a passage in Selden's notes on Drayton's Poly-Olbion, in which he elucidates some point of topography by a reference not only to Stowe and Holinshed and Camden and Saxo-Grammaticus and Dugdale and several other authors that we are acquainted with, but to twenty obscure names, that no modern reader ever heard of: and so on through the notes to a folio volume, written apparently for relaxation. Such were the intellectual amusements of our ancestors! Learning then ordinarily lay-in of folio volumes: now she litters octavos and duodecimos, and will soon, as in France, miscarry of half-sheets! Poor Job Orton! why should I not record a jest of his (perhaps the only one he ever made,) emblematic as it is of the living and the learning of the good old times? The Rev. Job Orton was a Dissenting Minister in the middle of the last century, and had grown heavy and gouty by sitting long at dinner and at his studies. He could only get down-stairs at last by spreading the folio volumes of Caryl's Commentaries upon Job on the steps and sliding down them. Surprised one day in his descent, he exclaimed, "You have often heard of Caryl upon Job—now you see Job upon Caryl!" This same quaint-witted gouty old gentleman seems to have been one of those "superior, happy spirits," who slid through life on the rollers of learning, enjoying the good things of the world and laughing at them, and turning his infirmities to a livelier account than his patriarchal name-sake. Reader, didst thou ever hear either of Job Orton or of Caryl on Job? I dare say not. Yet the one did not therefore slide down his theological staircase the less pleasantly; nor did the other compile his Commentaries in vain! For myself, I should like to browze on folios, and have to deal chiefly with authors that I have scarcely strength to lift, that are as solid as they are heavy, and if dull, are full of matter. It is delightful to repose on the wisdom of the ancients; to have some great name at hand, besides one's own initials always staring one in the face: to travel out of one's-self into the Chaldee, Hebrew, and Egyptian characters; to have the palm-trees waving mystically in the margin of the page, and the camels moving slowly on in the distance of three thousand years. In that dry desert of learning, we gather strength and patience, and a strange and insatiable thirst of knowledge. The ruined monuments of antiquity are also there, and the fragments of buried cities (under which the adder lurks,) and cool springs, and green sunny spots, and the whirlwind and the lion's roar, and the shadow of angelic wings. To those who turn with supercilious disgust from the ponderous tomes of scholastic learning, who never felt the witchery of the Talmuds and the Cabbala, of the Commentators and the Schoolmen, of texts and authorities, of types and anti-types, hieroglyphics and mysteries, dogmas and contradictions, and endless controversies and doubtful labyrinths, and quaint traditions, I would recommend the lines of Warton written in a blank leaf of Dugdale's Monasticon:

> "Deem not devoid of elegance the sage,
> By fancy's genuine feelings unbeguiled,

Of painful pedantry the poring child,
Who turns of these proud domes the historic page,
Now sunk by time and Henry's fiercer rage.
Think'st thou the warbling Muses never smiled
On his lone hours? Ingenuous views engage
His thoughts, on themes (unclassic falsely styled)
Intent. While cloister'd piety displays
Her mouldering scroll, the piercing eye explores
New manners and the pomp of elder days;
Whence culls the pensive bard his pictured stores.
Nor rough nor barren are the winding ways
Of hoar Antiquity, but strewn with flowers."

This sonnet, if it were not for a certain intricacy in the style would be a perfect one: at any rate, the thought it contains is fine and just. Some of the *caput mortuum* of learning is a useful ballast and relief to the mind. It must turn back to the acquisitions of others as its natural sustenance and support; facts must go hand in hand with feelings, or it will soon prey like an empty stomach on itself, or be the sport of the windy impertinence of ingenuity self-begotten. Away then with this idle cant, as if every thing were barbarous and without interest, that is not the growth of our own times and of our own taste; with this everlasting evaporation of mere sentiment, this affected glitter of style, this equivocal generation of thought out of ignorance and vanity, this total forgetfulness of the subject, and display of the writer, as if every possible train of speculation must originate in the pronoun *I*, and the world had nothing to do but to look on and admire. It will not do to consider all truth or good as a reflection of our own pampered and inordinate self-love: to resolve the solid fabric of the universe into an essence of Della-Cruscan witticism and conceit. The perpetual search after effect, the premature and effeminate indulgence of nervous sensibility, defeats and wears itself out. We cannot make an abstraction of the intellectual ore from the material dross, of feelings from objects, of results from causes. We must get at the kernel of pleasure through the dry and hard husk of truth. We must wait nature's time. These false births weaken the constitution. It has been observed that men of science live longer than mere men of letters. They exercise their understandings more, their sensibility less. There is with them less *wear and tear* of the irritable fibre, which is not shattered and worn to a very thread. On the hill of science, they keep an eye intent on truth and fame :

> "Calm pleasures there abide, majestic pains."—

while the man of letters mingles in the crowd below, courting popularity and pleasure. His is a frail and feverish existence accordingly, and he soon exhausts himself in the tormenting pursuit—in the alternate excitement of his imagination and gratification of his vanity.

> ———"Earth destroys
> Those raptures duly: Erebus disdains!"

Lord Byron appears to me to have fairly run himself out in his debilitating intercourse with the wanton Muse. He had no other idea left but that of himself and the public—he was uneasy unless he was occupied in administering repeated provocatives to idle curiosity, and receiving strong doses of praise or censure in return: the irritation at last became so violent and importunate, that he could neither keep on with it nor take any repose from it. The glittering orb of heated popularity

> "Glared round his soul and mocked his closing eye-lids."

The successive endless cantos of Don Juan were the quotidian that killed him!—Old Sir Walter will last long enough, stuffing his wallet and his "wame," as he does, with mouldy fragments and crumbs of comfort. He does not "spin his brains," but something much better. The cunning *chield*, the old *canty gaberlunzie* has got hold of another clue—that of nature and history—and long may he spin it, "even to the crack of doom," watching the threads as they are about to break through his fringed eyelids, catching a tradition in his mouth like a trap, and heaping his forehead with facts, till it shoves up the Baronet's blue bonnet into a Baron's crown, and then will the old boy turn in his chair, rest his chin upon his crutch, give a last look to the Highlands, and with his latest breath, thank God that he leaves the world as he found it! And so he will pretty nearly with one exception, the Scotch Novels. They are a small addition to this round world of ours. We and they shall jog on merrily together for a century or two, I hope, till some future Lord Byron asks, "Who reads Sir Walter Scott now?" There is the last and almost worst of them. I would take it with me into a wilderness. Three pages of poor Peter Peebles will at any time redeem three volumes of Red-Gauntlet. And Nanty Ewart is even better with his steady walk upon the deck of the Jumping Jenny and his story of himself, "and her whose foot (whether he came in or went out) was never off the stair." There you came near me, there you touched me, old true-penny! And then again the catch that blind Willie and his wife and the boy sing in the hollow of the heath—there is more mirth and heart's ease in it than in all Lord Byron's Don Juan, or Mr. Moore's Lyrics. And why? Because the author is thinking of beggars and a beggar's brat, and not of himself, while he writes it. He looks at nature, sees it, hears it, feels it, and believes that it exists, before it is printed, hot-pressed and labelled on the back, *By the Author of Waverley*. He does not fancy, nor would he for one moment have it supposed, that his name and fame compose all that is worth a moment's consideration in the universe. This is the great secret of his writings—a perfect indifference to self. Whether it is the same in his politics, I cannot say. I see no comparison between his prose-writing and Lord Byron's poems. The only writer that I should hesitate about is Wordsworth. There are thoughts and lines of his that to me show as fine a mind, a subtler sense of beauty than any thing of Sir Walter's, such as those above quoted, and that other line in the Laodamia—

> "Elysian beauty, melancholy grace."

I would as soon have written that line as have carved a Greek statue. But in this opinion I shall have three or four with me, and all the rest of the world against me. I do not dislike a House-of-Commons Minority in matters of taste—that is, one that is select, independent, and has a proxy from posterity.—To return to the question with which I set out.

Learning is its own exceeding great reward; and at the period of which we speak, it bore other fruits, not unworthy of it. Genius, when not smothered and kept down by learning, blazed out triumphantly over it; and the Fancy often rose to a height proportioned to the depth to which the Understanding had struck its roots. After the first emancipation of the mind from the trammels of Papal ignorance and superstition, people seemed to be in a state of breathless wonder at the new light that was suffered to break in upon them. They were startled as "at the birth of nature from the unapparent deep." They seized on all objects that rose in view with a firm and eager grasp, in order to be sure whether they were imposed upon or not. The mind of man, "pawing to get free" from custom and prejudice, struggled and plunged, and like the fabled Pegasus, opened at each spring a new source of truth. Images were piled on heaps, as well as opinions and facts, the ample materials for poetry or prose, to which the bold hand of enthusiasm applied its torch, and kindled it into a flame. The accumulation of past records seemed to form the frame-work of their prose, as the observation of external objects did of their poetry—

"Whose body nature was, and *man* the soul."

Among poets they have to boast such names, for instance, as Shakespear, Spenser, Beaumont and Fletcher, Marlowe, Webster, Deckar, and soon after, Milton; among prose-writers, Selden, Bacon, Jeremy Taylor, Baxter, and Sir Thomas Brown; for patriots, they have such men as Pym, Hampden, Sydney; and for a witness of their zeal and piety, they have Fox's Book of Martyrs, instead of which we have Mr. Southey's Book of the Church, and a whole host of renegades! Perhaps Jeremy Taylor and also Beaumont and Fletcher may be mentioned as rather exceptions to the gravity and severity I have spoken of as characteristic of our earlier literature. It is true, they are florid and voluptuous in their style, but they still keep their state apart, and there is an eloquence of the heart about them, which seems to gush from the "pure well of English undefiled." The one treats of sacred things with a vividness and fervour as if he had a revelation of them: the others speak of human interests with a tenderness as if man's nature were divine. Jeremy Taylor's pen seems to have been guided by the very spirit of joy and youth, but yet with a sense of what was due to the reverence of age, and "tears of pious awe, that feared to have offended." Beaumont and Fletcher's love-scenes are like the meeting of hearts in Elysium. Let any one have dwelt on any object with the greatest fondness, let him have cherished the feeling to the utmost height, and have it put to the test in the most trying circumstances, and he will find it described to the life in Beaumont and Fletcher. Our modern dramatists (with one exception,*) appeal not to nature or the heart, but—to the readers of modern poetry. Words and paper, each *couleur de rose*, are the two requisites of a fashionable style. But the glossy splendour, the voluptuous glow of the obsolete, old-fashioned writers just mentioned has nothing artificial, nothing meretricious in it. It is the luxuriance of natural feeling and fancy. I should as soon think of accusing the summer-rose of vanity for unfolding its leaves to the dawn, or the hawthorn that puts forth its blossoms in the genial warmth of spring, of affecting to be fine. We have heard a good deal of the pulpit-eloquence of Bossuet and other celebrated preachers of the time of Fenelon; but I doubt much whether all of them together could produce any number of passages to match the best of those in the Holy Living and Dying, or even Baxter's severe or thrilling denunciations of the insignificance and nothingness of life and the certainty of a judgment to come. There is a fine portrait of this last-named controversialist, with his high forehead and black velvet cap, in Calamy's Non-Conformist's Memorial, containing an account of the Two Thousand Ejected Ministers at the Restoration of Charles II. This was a proud list for Old England; and the account of their lives, their zeal, their eloquence and sufferings for conscience sake, is one of the most interesting chapters in the history of the human mind. How high it can soar in faith! How nobly it can arm itself with resolution and fortitude! How far it can surpass itself in cruelty and fraud! How incapable it seems to be of good, except as it is urged on by the contention with evil! The retired and inflexible descendants of the Two Thousand Ejected Ministers and their adherents are gone with the spirit of persecution that gave a soul and body to them; and with them, I am afraid the spirit of liberty, of manly independence, and of inward self-respect, is nearly extinguished in England. There appears to be no natural necessity for evil, but that there is a perfect indifference to good without it. One thing exists and has a value set upon it only as it has a foil in some other; learning is set off by ignorance, liberty by slavery, refinement by barbarism. The cultivation and attainment of any art or excellence is followed by its neglect and decay; and even religion owes its zest to the spirit of contradiction, for it flourishes most from persecution and hostile factions. Mr. Irving speaks of the great superiority of religion over every other motive, since it enabled its professors to "endure having hot molten lead poured down their throats." He forgets that it was religion that poured it down their throats, and that this principle, mixed with the frailty of human passion, has often been as ready to inflict, as to endure. I could make the world good, wise, happy to-morrow, if, when made, it would be contented to remain so without the alloy of mischief, misery, and absurdity: that is, if every possession did not require the principle of contrast, contradiction, and excess, to enliven and set it off and keep it at a safe distance from sameness and insipidity.

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* The author of Virginius.

The different styles of art and schools of learning vary and fluctuate on this principle. After the Restoration of Charles, the grave, enthusiastic, puritanical, "prick-eared" style became quite exploded, and a gay and piquant style, the reflection of courtly conversation and polished manners, and borrowed from the French, came into fashion, and lasted till the Revolution. Some examples of the same thing were given in the time of Charles I. by Sir J. Suckling and others, but they were eclipsed and overlaid by the prevalence and splendour of the opposite examples. It was at its height, however, in the reign of the restored monarch, and in the witty and licentious writings of Wycherley, Congreve, Rochester, and Waller. Milton alone stood out as a partisan of the old Elizabethan school. Out of compliment, I suppose, to the Houses of Orange and Hanover, we sobered down, after the Revolution, into a strain of greater demureness, and into a Dutch and German fidelity of imitation of domestic manners and individual character, as in the periodical Essayists, and in the works of Fielding and Hogarth. Yet, if the two last-named painters of manners are not English, who are so? I cannot give up my partiality to them for the fag-end of a theory. They have this mark of genuine English intellect, that they constantly combine truth of external observation with strength of internal meaning. The Dutch are patient observers of nature, but want character and feeling. The French, as far as we have imitated them, aim only at the pleasing, and glance over the surfaces of words and things. Thus has our literature descended (according to the foregoing scale) from the tone of the pulpit to that of the court or drawing-room, from the drawing-room into the parlour, and from thence, if some critics say true, into the kitchen and ale-house. It may do even worse than that!

French literature has undergone great changes in like manner, and was supposed to be at its height in the time of Louis XIV. We sympathize less, however, with the pompous and set speeches in the tragedies of Racine and Corneille, or in the serious comedies of Molière, than we do with the grotesque farces of the latter, with the exaggerated descriptions and humour of Rabelais (whose wit was a madness, a drunkenness,) or with the accomplished humanity, the easy style, and gentlemanly and scholar-like sense of Montaigne. But these we consider as in a great measure English, or as what the old French character inclined to, before it was corrupted by courts and academies of criticism. The exquisite graces of La Fontaine, the indifferent sarcastic tone of Voltaire and Le Sage, who make light of every thing, and who produce their greatest effects with the most imperceptible and rapid touches, we give wholly to the constitutional genius of the French, and despair of imitating. Perhaps in all this we proceed by guess-work at best. Nations (particularly rival nations) are bad judges of one another's literature or physiognomy. The French certainly do not understand *us*: it is most probable we do not understand *them*. How slowly great works, great names make their way across the Channel! M. Tracey's "Idéologie" has not yet been heard of among us, and a Frenchman who asks if you have read it almost subjects himself to the suspicion of being the author. They have also their little sects and parties in literature, and though they do not nickname and vilify their rivals, as is done with us, (thanks to the national politeness!) yet if you do not belong to the prevailing party, they very civilly suppress all mention of you, your name is not noticed in the journals, nor your work inquired for at the shops.

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* In Paris, to be popular, you must wear out, they say, twenty pair of

Those who explain every thing by final causes (that is, who deduce causes from effects,) might avail themselves of their privilege on this occasion. There must be some checks to the excessive increase of literature as of population, or we should be overwhelmed by it; and they are happily found in the envy, dulness, prejudices, and vanity of mankind. While we think we are weighing the merits of an author, we are indulging in our own national pride, indolence, or ill-humour, by laughing at what we do not understand, or condemning what thwarts our inclinations. The French reduce all philosophy to a set of agreeable sensations: the Germans reduce the commonest things to an abstruse metaphysics. The one are a mystical, the other a superficial people. Both proceed by the severest logic; but the real guide to their conclusions is the proportion of phlegm or mercury in their dispositions. When we appeal to a man's reason against his inclinations, we speak a language without meaning, and which he will not understand. Different nations have favourite modes of feeling and of accounting for things to please themselves and fall in with their ordinary habits; and our different systems of philosophy, literature, and art meet, contend, and repel one another on the confines of opinion, because their elements will not amalgamate with our several humours, and all the while we fancy we settle the question by an abstract exercise of reason, and by laying down some refined and exclusive standard of taste. There is no great harm in this delusion, nor can there be much in seeing through it; for we shall still go on just as we did before.*

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pumps and twenty pair of silk stockings, in calls upon the different newspaper editors. In England, you have only to give in your resignation at the Treasury, and you receive your passport to the John Bull Parnassus; otherwise you are shut out and made a bye-word. Literary jealousy and littleness is still the motive, politics the pretext, and blackguardism the mode.

* Bonaparte got a committee of the French Institute to draw up a report of the Kantean Philosophy; he might as well have ordered them to draw up a report of the geography of the moon. It is difficult for an Englishman to understand Kant; for a Frenchman impossible. The latter has a certain routine of phrases into which his ideas run habitually as into a mould, and you cannot get him out of them.

END OF PART II.

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TABLE TALK.

ESSAY I.

On the feeling of immortality in youth.

No young man believes he shall ever die. It was a saying of my brother's, and a fine one. There is a feeling of Eternity in youth which makes us amends for everything. To be young is to be as one of the Immortals. One half of time indeed is spent—the other half remains in store for us with all its countless treasures, for there is no line drawn and we see no limit to our hopes and wishes. We make the coming age our own—

> "The vast, unbounded prospect lies before us."

Death, old age, are words without a meaning, a dream, a fiction, with which we have nothing to do. Others may have undergone, or may still undergo them—we "bear a charmed life," which laughs to scorn all such idle fancies. As, in setting out on a delightful journey, we strain our eager sight forward,

> "Bidding the lovely scenes at distance hail,"

and see no end to prospect after prospect, new objects presenting themselves as we advance, so in the outset of life we see no end to our desires nor to the opportunities of gratifying them. We have as yet found no obstacle, no disposition to flag, and it seems that we can go on so for ever. We look round in a new world, full of life and motion, and ceaseless progress, and feel in ourselves all the vigor and spirit to keep pace with it, and do not foresee from any present signs how we shall be left behind in the race, decline into old age, and drop into the grave. It is the simplicity and, as it were, abstractedness of our feelings in youth that (so to speak) identifies us with nature and (our experience being weak and our passion strong) makes us fancy ourselves immortal like it. Our short-lived connection with being, we fondly flatter ourselves, is an indissoluble and lasting union. As infants smile and sleep, we are rocked in the cradle of our desires, and hushed into fancied security by the roar of the universe around us—we quaff the cup of life with eager thirst without draining it, and joy and hope seem ever mantling to the brim—objects press around us, filling the mind with their magnitude and with the throng of desires that wait upon them, so that there is no room for the thoughts of death. We are too much dazzled by the gorgeousness and novelty of the bright waking dream about us to discern the dim shadow lingering for us in the distance. Nor would the hold that life has taken of us permit us to detach our thoughts that way even if we could. We are too much absorbed in present objects and pursuits. While the spirit of youth remains unimpaired, ere "the wine of life is drunk," we are like people intoxicated or in a fever, who are hurried away by the violence of their own sensations: it is only as present objects begin to pall upon the sense, as we have been disappointed in our favorite pursuits, cut off from our closest ties, that we by degrees become weaned from the world, that passion loosens its hold upon futurity, and that we begin to contemplate as in a glass darkly the possibility of parting with it for good. Till then, the example of others has no effect upon us. Casualties we avoid; the slow approaches of age we play at *hide and seek* with. Like the foolish fat scullion in Sterne who hears that Master Bobby is dead, our only reflection is, "So am not I!" The idea of death, instead of staggering our confidence, only seems to strengthen and enhance our sense of the possession and our enjoyment of life. Others may fall around us like leaves or be mowed down by the scythe of Time like grass: these are but metaphors to the unreflecting buoyant ears and overweening presumption of youth. It is not till we see the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy withering around us, that we give up the flattering delusions that before led us on, and that the emptiness and dreariness of the prospect before us reconciles us hypothetically to the silence of the grave.

Life is indeed a strange gift, and its privileges are most mysterious. No wonder when it is first granted to us, that our gratitude, our admiration, and our delight, should prevent us from reflecting on our own nothingness, or from thinking it will ever be recalled. Our first and strongest impressions are borrowed from the mighty scene that is opened to us, and we unconsciously transfer its durability as well as its splendor to ourselves. So newly found we cannot think of parting with it yet, or at least put off that consideration *sine die*. Like a rustic at a fair, we are full of amazement and rapture, and have no thought of going home, or that it will soon be night. We know our existence only by ourselves, and confound our knowledge with the objects of it. We and nature are therefore one. Otherwise the illusion, the "feast of reason and the flow of soul," to which we are invited, is a mockery and a cruel insult. We do not go from a play till the last act is ended, and the lights are about to be extinguished. But the fairy face of nature still shines on: shall we be called away before the curtain falls, or ere we have scarce had a glimpse of what is going on? Like children, our step-mother nature holds us up to see the raree-show of the universe, and then, as if we were a burden to her to support, lets us fall down again. Yet what brave sublunary things does not this pageant present, like a ball or *fête* of the universe!

To see the golden sun, the azure sky, the outstretched ocean; to walk upon the green earth, and to be lord of a thousand creatures; to look down yawning precipices or over distant sunny vales; to see the world spread out under one's feet on a map; to bring the stars near; to view the smallest insects through a microscope; to read history, and consider the revolutions of empire and the successions of generations; to hear of the glory of Tyre, of Sidon, of Babylon, and of Susa, and to say all these were before me and are now nothing; to say I exist in such a point of time, and in such a point of space; to be a spectator and a part of its every moving scene; to witness the change of season, of spring and autumn, of winter and summer; to feel hot and cold, pleasure and pain, beauty and deformity, right and wrong; to be sensible to the accidents of nature; to consider the mighty world of eye and ear; to listen to the stock-dove's notes amid the forest deep; to journey over moor and mountain: to hear the midnight sainted choir; to visit lighted halls, or the cathedral's gloom, or sit in crowded theatres and see life itself mocked; to study the works of art, and refine the sense of beauty to agony; to worship fame, and to dream of immortality; to look upon the Vatican, and to read Shakspeare; to gather up the wisdom of the ancients, and to pry into the future; to listen to the trump of war, the shout of victory; to question history as to the movements of the human heart; to seek for truth; to plead the cause of humanity; to overlook the world as if time and nature poured their treasures at our feet,—to be and to do all this, and then in a moment to be nothing—to have it all snatched from us as by a juggler's trick, or a phantasmagoria! There is something in this transition from all to nothing that shocks us and damps the enthusiasm of youth new flushed with hope and pleasure, and we cast the comfortless thought as far from us as we can. In the first enjoyment of the estate of life we discard the fear of debts and duns, and never think of the final payment of our great debt to nature. Art we know is long, life we flatter ourselves should be so too. We see no end of the difficulties and delays we have to encounter: perfection is slow of attainment, and we must have time to accomplish it in. The fame of the great names we look up to is immortal; and shall not we who contemplate it imbibe a portion of etherial fire, the *divinæ particula auræ*, which nothing can extinguish? A wrinkle in Rembrandt or in nature takes whole days to resolve itself into its component parts, its softenings and its sharpnesses; we refine upon our perfections, and unfold the intricacies of nature. What a prospect for the future! What a task have we not begun! And shall we be arrested in the middle of it? We do not count our time thus employed lost, or our pains thrown away; we do not flag or grow tired, but gain new vigor at our endless task. Shall Time then grudge us to finish what we have begun, and have formed a compact with nature to do? Why not fill up the blank that is left us in this manner? I have looked for hours at Rembrandt without being conscious of the flight of time, but with every new wonder and delight, have thought that not only my own but another existence I could pass in the same manner. This rarefied, refined existence seemed to have no end, nor stint, nor principle of decay in it. The print would remain long after I who looked on it had become the prey of worms. The thing seems in itself out of all reason: health, strength, appetite are opposed to the idea of death, and we are not ready to credit it till we have found our illusions vanished, and our hopes grown cold. Objects in youth from novelty, &c., are stamped upon the brain with such force and integrity that one thinks nothing can remove or obliterate them. They are riveted there, and appear to us as an element of our nature. It must be a mere violence that destroys them, not a natural decay. In the very strength of this persuasion we seem to enjoy an age by anticipation. We melt down years into a single moment of intense sympathy, and by anticipating the fruits defy the ravages of time. If then a single moment of our lives is worth years, shall we set any limits to its total value and extent? Again, does it not happen that so secure do we think ourselves of an indefinite period of existence, that at times when left to ourselves, and impatient of novelty, we feel annoyed at what seems to us the slow and creeping progress of time, and argue that if it always moves at this tedious snail's pace it will never come to an end? How ready are we to sacrifice any space of time which separates us from a favorite object, little thinking that before long we shall find it move too fast!

For my own part I started in life with the French Revolution, and I have lived, alas! to see the end of it. But I did not foresee this result. My sun rose with the first dawn of liberty, and I did not think how soon both must set. The new impulse to ardor given to men's minds imparted a congenial warmth and glow to mine; we were strong to run a race together, and I little dreamed that long before mine was set, the sun of liberty would turn to blood, or set once more in the night of despotism. Since then, I confess, I have no longer felt myself young, for with that my hopes fell.

I have since turned my thoughts to gathering up some of the fragments of my early recollections, and putting them into a form to which I might occasionally revert. The future was barred to my progress, and I turned for consolation and encouragement to the past. It is thus that while we find our person-

and substantial identity vanishing from us, we strive to gain a reflected and vicarious one in our thoughts: we do not like to perish wholly, and wish to bequeathe our names, at least, to posterity. As long as we can make our cherished thoughts and nearest interests live in the minds of others, we do not appear to have retired altogether from the stage. We still occupy the breasts of others, and exert an influence and power over them, and it is only our bodies that are reduced to dust and powder. Our favorite speculations still find encouragement, and we make as great a figure in the eye of the world or perhaps a greater than in our life-time. The demands of our self-love are thus satisfied, and these are the most imperious and unremitting. Besides, if by our intellectual superiority we survive ourselves in this world, by our virtues and faith we may attain an interest in another, and a higher state of being, and thus flourish in *immortal youth*, and may thus be recipients at the same time of men and angels.

> "E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
> E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires."

As we grow old, our sense of the value of time becomes vivid. Nothing else indeed seems of any consequence. We can never cease wondering that that which has ever been should cease to be. We find many things remain the same: why then should there be change in us? This adds a convulsive grasp of whatever is, a sense of fallacious hollowness in all we see. Instead of the full, pulpy feeling of youth tasting existence and every object in it, all is flat and vapid,—a whited sepulchre, fair without but full of ravening and uncleanness within. The world is a witch that puts us off with false shows and appearances. The simplicity of youth, the confiding expectation, the boundless raptures, are gone: we only think of getting out of it as well as we can, and without any great mischance or annoyance. The flush of illusion, even the complacent retrospect of past joys and hopes, is over: if we can slip out of life without indignity, can escape with little bodily infirmity, and frame our minds to the calm and respectable composure of *still-life* before we return to absolute nothingness, it is as much as we can expect. We do not die wholly at our deaths: we have mouldered away gradually long before. Faculty after faculty, interest after interest, attachment after attachment disappear: we are torn from ourselves while living, year after year sees us no longer the same, and death only consigns the last fragment of what we were to the grave. That we should wear out by slow stages, and dwindle at last into nothing, is not wonderful, when even in our prime our strongest impressions leave little traces but for the moment, and we are the creatures of petty circumstances. How little effect is made on us in our best days by the books we have read, the scenes we have witnessed, the sensations we have gone through! Think only of the feelings we experience in reading a fine romance (one of Sir Walter's, for instance); what beauty, what sublimity, what interest, what heart-rending emotions! You would suppose the feelings you then experience would last for ever, or subdue the mind to their own harmony and tone: while we are reading it seems as if nothing could ever after put us out of our way, or trouble us:—the first splash of mud that we get on entering the street, the first twopence we are cheated out of, the feeling vanishes clean out of our minds, and we become the prey of petty and annoying circumstance. The mind soars to the lofty: it is at home in the grovelling, the disagreeable, and the little. And yet we wonder that age should be feeble and querulous,—that the freshness of youth should fade away. Both worlds would hardly satisfy the extravagance of our desires and our presumption.

ESSAY II.

On the Want of Money.

It is hard to be without money. To get on without it is like travelling in a foreign country without a passport—you are stopped, suspected, and made ridiculous at every turn, besides being subjected to the most serious inconveniences. The want of money I here allude to is not altogether that which arises from absolute poverty—for where there is a downright absence of the common necessaries of life, this must be remedied by incessant hard labor, and the least we can receive in return is a supply of our daily wants—but that uncertain, casual, precarious mode of existence, in which the temptation to spend remains after the means are exhausted, the want of money joined with the hope and possibility of getting it, the intermediate state of difficulty and suspense between the last guinea or shilling and the next that we may have the good luck to encounter. This gap. this unwelcome interval, constantly recurring, however shabbily got over, is really full of many anxieties, misgivings, mortifications, meannesses, and deplorable embarrassments of every description. I may attempt (this Essay is not a fanciful speculation) to enlarge upon a few of them.

It is hard to go without one's dinner through sheer distress, but harder still to go without one's breakfast. Upon the strength of that first and aboriginal meal, one may muster courage to face the difficulties before one, and to dare the worst: but to be roused out of one's warm bed, and perhaps a profound oblivion of care, with golden dreams (for poverty does not prevent golden dreams), and told there is nothing for breakfast, is cold comfort, for which one's half-strung nerves are not prepared, and throws a damp upon the prospects of the day. It is a bad beginning. A man without a breakfast is a poor creature, unfit to go in search of one, to meet the frown of the world, or to borrow a shilling of a friend. He may beg at the corner of a street—nothing is too mean for the tone of his feelings—robbing on the highway is out of the question, as requiring too much courage, and some opinion of a man's self. It is, indeed, as old Fuller, or some worthy of that age, expresses it, "the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man," to learn, the first thing after he rises in the morning, or even to be dunned with it in bed, that there is no loaf, tea, or butter in the house, and that the baker, the grocer, and the butterman have refused to give any farther credit. This is taking one sadly at a disadvantage. It is striking at one's spirit and resolution in their very source, the stomach—it is attacking one on the side of hunger and mortification at once; it is casting one into the very mire of humility and Slough of Despond. The worst is, to know what face to put upon the matter, what excuse to make to the servants, what answer to send to the tradespeople; whether to laugh it off, or be grave, or angry, or indifferent; in short, to know how to parry off an evil which you cannot help. What a luxury, what a God's-send in such a dilemma, to find a half-crown which had slipped through a hole in the lining of your waistcoat, a crumpled banknote in your breeches-pocket, or a guinea clinking in the bottom of your trunk, which had been thoughtlessly left there out of a former heap! Vain hope! Unfounded illusion! The experienced in such matters know better, and laugh in their sleeves at so improbable a suggestion. Not a corner, not a cranny, not a pocket, not a drawer, has been left unrummaged, or has not been subjected over and over again to more than the strictness of a custom-house scrutiny. Not the slightest rustle of a piece of bank-paper, not the gentlest pressure of a piece of hard metal, but would have given notice of its hiding-place with electrical rapidity, long before, in such circumstances. All the variety of pecuniary resources, which form a legal tender in the current coin of the realm, are assuredly drained, exhausted to the last farthing before this time. But is there nothing in the house that one can turn to account? Is there not an old family-watch, or piece of plate, or a ring, or some worthless trinket, that one could part with? nothing belonging to one's self, or a friend, that one could raise the wind upon, till something better turns up? At this moment an old-clothes man passes, and his deep, harsh tones sound like a premeditated insult on one's distress, and banish the thought of applying for his assistance, as one's eye glances furtively at an old hat or a great-coat, hung up behind a closet-door. Humiliating contemplations! Miserable uncertainty! One hesitates, and the opportunity is gone by; for without one's breakfast, one has not the resolution to do anything!—The late Mr. Sheridan was often reduced to this unpleasant predicament. Possibly he had little appetite for breakfast himself; but the servants complained bitterly on this head, and said that Mrs. Sheridan was sometimes kept waiting for a couple of hours, while they had to hunt through the neighborhood, and beat up for coffee, eggs, and French rolls. The same perplexity in this instance appears to have extended to the providing for the dinner; for so sharp-set were they, that to cut short a debate with a butcher's apprentice about leaving a leg of mutton without the money, the cook clapped it into the pot: the butcher's boy, probably used to such encounters, with equal coolness took it out again, and marched off with it in his tray in triumph. It required a man to be the author of "The School for Scandal," to run the gauntlet of such disagreeable occurrences every hour of the day.*

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* Taylor, of the Opera House, used to say of Sheridan, that he could not pull off his hat to him in the street without its costing him fifty pounds; and if he stopped to speak with him, it was a hundred. No one could be a stronger instance than he was of what is called *living from hand to mouth.* He was always in want of money, though he received vast sums which he must have disbursed; and yet nobody can tell what became of them, for he paid nobody. He spent his wife's fortune (sixteen hundred pounds) in a six weeks' jaunt to Bath, and returned to town as poor as a rat. Whenever he and his son were invited out into the country, they always went in two post-chaises and four; he in one, and his son Tom following in another. This is the secret of those who live in a round of extravagance, and are at the same time always in debt and difficulty—they throw away all the ready money they get upon any new-fangled whim or project that comes in their way, and never think of paying off old scores, which of course accumulate to a dreadful amount. "Such gain the cap of him who makes them fine, yet keeps his book uncrossed." Sheridan once wanted to take Mrs. Sheridan a very handsome dress down into the country, and went to Barber and Nunn's to order it, saying he must have it by such a day, but promising they should have ready money. Mrs. Barber (I think it was) made answer that

The going without a dinner is another of the miseries of wanting money, though one can bear up against this calamity better than

the time was short, but that ready money was a charming thing, and that he should have it. Accordingly, at the time appointed, she brought the dress, which came to five-and-twenty pounds, and it was sent in to Mr. Sheridan, who sent out a Mr. Grimm (one of his jackalls) to say that he admired it exceedingly, and that he was sure Mrs. Sheridan would be delighted with it, but he was sorry to have nothing under a hundred pound banknote in the house. She said she had come provided for such an accident; and could give change for a hundred, two hundred, or five hundred pound note, if it were necessary. Grimm then went back to his principal for further instructions; who made an excuse that he had no stamped receipt by him. For this, Mrs. B. said she was also provided; she had brought one in her pocket. At each message, she could hear them laughing heartily in the next room, at the idea of having met with their match for once; and presently after, Sheridan came out in high good humor, and paid her the amount of her bill in ten, five, and one pound notes. Once when a creditor brought him a bill for payment which had often been presented before, and the man complained of its soiled and tattered state, and said he was quite ashamed to see it, "I'll tell you what I'd advise you to do with it, my friend," said Sheridan; "take it home, and write it upon *parchment!*" He once mounted a horse which a horse-dealer was showing off near a coffee-house at the bottom of St. James's street, rode it to Tattersall's, and sold it, and walked quietly back to the spot from which he set out. The owner was furious, swore he would be the death of him; and, in a quarter of an hour afterwards, they were seen sitting together over a bottle of wine in the coffee-house, the horse-jockey with the tears running down his face at Sheridan's jokes, and almost ready to hug him as an honest fellow. Sheridan's house and lobby were beset with duns every morning, who were told that Mr. Sheridan was not yet up, and shown into the several rooms on each side of the entrance. As soon as he had breakfasted, he asked, "Are those doors all shut, John?" and, being assured they were, marched out very deliberately between them, to the astonishment of his self-invited guests, who soon found the bird was flown. I have heard one of his old city friends declare, that such was the effect of his frank, cordial manner, and insinuating eloquence, that he was always afraid to go to ask him for a debt of long standing, lest he should borrow twice as much. A play had been put off one night, or a favorite actor did not appear, and the audience demanded to have their money back again: but when they came to the door they were told by the check-takers there was none for them, for that Mr. Sheridan had been in the meantime, and had carried off all the money in the till. He used often to get the old cobbler who kept a stall under the ruins of Drury Lane to broil a beef-steak for him, and take their dinner together. On the night that Drury Lane was burnt down, Sheridan was in the House of Commons, making a speech, though he could hardly stand without leaning his hands on the table, and it the former, which really "blights the tender blossom and promise of the day." With one good meal, one may hold a parley with hunger, and moralize upon temperance. One has time to turn one's self, and look about one—to "screw one's courage to the sticking-place," to graduate the scale of disappointment, and stave off appetite till supper-time. You gain time, and time in this weather-cock world is everything. You may dine at two, or at six, or seven—as most convenient. You may in the meanwhile receive an invitation to dinner, or some one (not knowing how you are circumstanced) may send you a present of a haunch of venison, or a brace of pheasants, from the country, or a distant relation may die and leave you a legacy, or a patron may call and overwhelm you with his smiles and bounty,

"As kind as kings upon their coronation day;"

was with some difficulty he was forced away, urging the plea, "What signified the concerns of a private individual, compared to the good of the state?" When he got to Covent Garden, he went into the Piazza Coffee-House, to steady himself with another bottle, and then strolled out to the end of the Piazza to look at the progress of the fire. Here he was accosted by Charles Kemble and Fawcett, who complimented him on the calmness with which he seemed to regard so great a loss. He declined this praise, and said—"Gentlemen, there are but three things in human life that in my opinion ought to disturb a wise man's patience The first of these is bodily pain, and that (whatever the ancient stoics may have said to the contrary) is too much for any man to bear without flinching: this I have felt severely, and I know it to be the case. The second is the loss of a friend whom you have dearly loved; that, gentlemen, is a great evil: this I have also felt, and I know it to be too much for any man's fortitude. And the third is the consciousness of having done an unjust action. That, gentlemen, is a great evil, a very great evil, too much for any man to endure the reflection of; but that" (laying his hand upon his heart), "but that, thank God, I have never felt!" I have been told that these were nearly the very words, except that he appealed to the *mens conscia recti* very emphatically three or four times over, by an excellent authority, Mr. Matthews the player, who was on the spot at the time,—a gentleman whom the public admire deservedly, but with whose real talents and nice discrimination of character his friends only are acquainted. Sheridan's reply to the watchman who had picked him up in the street, and who wanted to know who he was, "I am Mr. Wilberforce!"—is well known, and shows that, however frequently he might be at a loss for money, he never wanted wit!

or there is no saying what may happen. One may wait for dinner—breakfast admits of no delay, of no interval interposed between that and our first waking thoughts.* Besides, there are shifts and devices, shabby and mortifying enough, but still available in case of need. How many expedients are there in this great city, time out of mind and times without number, resorted to by the dilapidated and thrifty speculator, to get through this grand difficulty without utter failure! One may dive into a cellar, and dine on boiled beef and carrots for temperance, with the knives and forks chained to the table, and jostled by greasy elbows that seem to make such precaution not unnecessary (hunger is proof against indignity!)—or one may contrive to part with a superfluous article of wearing apparel, and carry home a mutton-chop and cook it in a garret; or one may drop in at a friend's at the dinner-hour, and be asked to stay or not; or one may walk out and take a turn in the Park, about the time, and return home to tea, so as at least to avoid the sting of the evil—the appearance of not having dined. You then have the laugh on your side, having deceived the gossips, and can submit to the want of a sumptuous repast without murmuring, having saved your pride, and made a virtue of necessity. I say all this may be done by a man without family (for what business has a man without money with one?—*See English Malthus and Scotch Macculloch*)—and it is only my intention here to bring forward such instances of the want of money as are tolerable both in theory and practice. I once lived on coffee (as an experiment) for a fortnight together, while I was finishing the copy of a half-length portrait of a Manchester manufacturer, who died worth a plum. I rather slurred over the coat, which was a reddish brown, "of formal cut," to receive my five guineas, with which I went to market myself, and dined on sausages and mashed potatoes, and while they were getting ready, and I could hear them hissing in the pan, read a volume of "Gil Blas," containing the account of the fair Aurora. This was in the days of my youth. Gentle reader, do not smile! Neither Monsieur de Very, nor Louis XVIII., over an oyster-*paté*, nor Apicius himself, ever understood the meaning of the word *luxury*, better than I did at that moment! If the want of money has its drawbacks and disadvantages, it is not without its contrasts and counterbalancing effects, for which I fear nothing else can make us amends. Amelia's *hashed mutton* is immortal; and there is something amusing, though carried to excess and caricature (which is very unusual with the author) in the contrivance of old Caleb, in "The Bride of Lammermuir," for raising the wind at breakfast, dinner, and supper-time. I recollect a ludicrous instance of a disappointment in a dinner which happened to a person of my acquaintance some years ago. He was not only poor, but a very poor creature, as will be imagined. His wife had laid by fourpence (their whole remaining stock) to pay for the baking of a shoulder of mutton and potatoes, which they had in the house, and on her return home from some errand, she found he had expended it in purchasing a new string for a guitar. On this occasion, a witty friend quoted the lines from Milton:—

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* In Scotland, it seems, the draught of ale or whiskey, with which you commence the day, is emphatically called "taking your *morning*."

> "And ever against *eating* cares,
> Wrap me in soft Lydian airs!"

Defoe, in his "Life of Colonel Jack," gives a striking picture of his young beggarly hero sitting with his companion for the first time in his life at a three-penny ordinary, and the delight with which he relished the hot smoking soup, and the airs with which he called about him—"and every time," he says, "we called for bread or beer, or whatever it might be, the waiter answered, 'coming, gentlemen, coming;' and this delighted me more than all the rest." It was about this time, as the same pithy author expresses it, "the Colonel took upon him to wear a shirt!" Nothing can be finer than the whole of the feeling conveyed in the commencement of this novel, about wealth and finery from the immediate contrast of privation and poverty. One would think it a labor, like the Tower of Babel, to build up a beau and a fine gentleman about town. The little vagabond's admiration of the old man at the banking house, who sits surrounded by heaps of gold, as if it were a dream or poetic vision, and his own eager, anxious visits day by day, to the hoard he had deposited in the hollow tree, are in the very foremost style of truth and nature. See the same intense feeling expressed in Luke's address to his riches, in the "City Madam," and in the extraordinary raptures of the "Spanish Rogue," in contemplating and hugging his ingots of pure gold and Spanish pieces of eight: to which Mr. Lamb has referred in excuse for the rhapsodies of some of our elder poets on this subject, which, to our present more refined and tamer apprehensions, sound like blasphemy.* In earlier times, before the diffusion of luxury, of knowledge, and other sources of enjoyment had become common, and acted as a diversion to the cravings of avarice, the passionate admiration, the idolatry, the hunger and thirst of wealth and all its precious symbols, was a kind of madness or hallucination, and Mammon was truly worshipped as a god!

It is among the miseries of the want of money, not to be able to pay your reckoning at an inn—or, if you have just enough to do that, to have nothing left for the waiter;—to be stopped at a turnpike gate, and forced to turn back;—not to venture to call a hackney-coach in a shower of rain—(when you have only one shilling left yourself, it is a *bore* to have it taken out of your pocket by a friend, who comes into your house eating peaches in a hot summer's day, and desiring you to pay for the coach in which he visits you);—not to be able to purchase a lottery ticket by which you might make your fortune, and get out of all your difficulties; —or to find a letter lying for you at a country post office, and not to have money in your pocket to free it, and to be obliged to return for it the next day.

The letter so unseasonably withheld may be supposed to contain money, and in this case there is a foretaste, a sort of actual possession taken through the thin folds of the paper and the wax, which, in some measure, indemnifies us for the delay: the bank-note, the post-bill seems to smile upon us, and shake hands through its prison bars;—or it may be a love-letter, and then the tantalisation is at its height: to be deprived in this manner of the only consolation that can make us amends for the want of money, by this very want—to fancy you see the name—to try to get a peep at the hand-writing—to touch the seal, and yet not dare to break it open—is provoking indeed—the climax of amorous and gentlemanly distress. Players are sometimes reduced to great extremity, by the seizure of their scenes and dresses, or (what is called) *the property of the theatre*, which hinders them from acting: as authors are prevented from finishing a work, for want of money to buy the books necessary to be consulted on some material point or circumstance, in the progress of it.

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* Shylock's lamentation over the loss of "his daughter and his ducats," is another case in point.

There is a set of poor devils, who live upon a printed *prospectus* of a work that never will be written, for which they solicit your name and half-a-crown. Decayed actresses take an annual benefit at one of the theatres; there are patriots who live upon periodical subscriptions, and critics who go about the country lecturing on poetry. I confess I envy none of these; but there are persons who, provided they can live, care not how they live—who are fond of display, even when it implies exposure; who court notoriety under every shape, and embrace the public with demonstrations of wantonness. There are genteel beggars, who send up a well-penned epistle requesting the loan of a shilling. Your snug bachelors and retired old maids pretend they can distinguish the knock of one of these at their door. I scarce know which I dislike the most—the patronage that affects to bring premature genius into notice, or that extends its piece-meal, formal charity towards it in its decline. I hate your Literary Funds and Funds for decayed Artists—they are corporations for the encouragement of meanness, pretence, and insolence. Of all people, I cannot tell how it is, but the players appear to me the best able to do without money. They are a privileged class. If not exempt from the common calls of necessity and business, they are enabled "by their so potent art," to soar above them. As they make imaginary ills their own, real ones become imaginary, sit light upon them, and are thrown off with comparatively little trouble. Their life is theatrical—its various accidents are the shifting scenes of a play—rags and finery, tears and laughter, a mock dinner or a real one, a crown of jewels or of straw, are to them nearly the same. I am sorry I cannot carry on this reasoning to actors who are past their prime. The gilding of their profession is then worn off, and shows the false metal beneath; vanity and hope (the props of their existence) have had their day; their former gaiety and carelessness serve as a foil to their present discouragement;

and want and infirmities press upon them at once. "We know what we are," as Ophelia says, "but we know not what we shall be." A workhouse seems the last resort of poverty and distress—a *parish-pauper* is another name for all that is mean and to be deprecated in human existence. But that name is but an abstraction, an average term—"within that lowest deep, a lower deep may open to receive us." I heard, not long ago, of a poor man who had been for many years a respectable tradesman in London, and who was compelled to take shelter in one of those receptacles of age and wretchedness, and who said he could be contented with it—he had his regular meals, a nook in the chimney, and a coat to his back—but he was forced to lie three in a bed, and one of the three was out of his mind and crazy, and his great delight was, when the others fell asleep, to tweak their noses, and flourish his night-cap over their heads, so that they were obliged to lie awake, and hold him down between them. One should be quite mad to bear this. To what a point of human insignificance may not human life dwindle! To what fine, agonizing threads will it not cling! Yet this man had been a lover in his youth, in a humble way, and still begins his letters to an old maid (his former flame), who sometimes comforts him by listening to his complaints, and treating him to a dish of weak tea, "MY DEAR MISS NANCY!"

Another of the greatest miseries of a want of money, is the tap of a dun at your door, or the previous silence when you expect it—the uneasy sense of shame at the approach of your tormentor; the wish to meet, and yet to shun the encounter; the disposition to bully, yet the fear of irritating; the real and the sham excuses; the submission to impertinence; the assurances of a speedy supply; the disingenuousness you practise on him and on yourself; the degradation in the eyes of others and your own. Oh! it is wretched to have to confront a just and oft-repeated demand, and to be without the means to satisfy it; to deceive the confidence that has been placed in you; to forfeit your credit; to be placed at the power of another, to be indebted to his lenity; to stand convicted of having played the knave or the fool; and to have no way left to escape contempt but by incurring pity. The suddenly meeting a creditor on turning the corner of a street, whom you have been trying to avoid for months, and had persuaded you were several hundred miles off, discomposes the features and shatters the nerves for some time. It is also a serious annoyance to be unable to repay a loan to a friend, who is in want of it—nor is it very pleasant to be so hard run, as to be induced to request a repayment. It is difficult to decide the preference between debts of honor and legal demands; both are bad enough, and almost a fair excuse for driving any one into the hands of money lenders—to whom an application, if successful, is accompanied with a sense of being in the vulture's gripe—a reflection akin to that of those who formerly sold themselves to the devil—or, if unsuccessful, is rendered doubly galling by the smooth, civil leer of cold contempt with which you are dismissed, as if they had escaped from your clutches—not you from theirs. If anything can be added to the mortification and distress arising from straitened circumstances, it is when vanity comes in to barb the dart of poverty—when you had a picture on which you had calculated, rejected from an exhibition, or a manuscript returned on your hands, or a tragedy damned, at the very instant when your cash and credit are at the lowest ebb. This forlorn and hopeless feeling has reached its *acme* in the prison-scene in Hogarth's "Rake's Progress," where his unfortunate hero has just dropped the Manager's letter from his hands, with the laconic answer written in it: "Your play has been read, and won't do."* To feel poverty is bad; but to feel it with the additional sense of our incapacity to shake it off, and that we have not merit enough to retrieve our circumstances—and, instead of being held up to admiration, are exposed to persecution and insult—is the last stage of human infirmity. We have heard it remarked, that the most pathetic story in the world is that of Smollett's fine gentleman and lady in gaol, who have been roughly handled by the mob for some paltry attempt at raising the wind, and she exclaims in extenuation of the pitiful figure he cuts, "Ah! he was a fine fellow once!"

It is justly remarked by the poet, that poverty has no greater inconvenience attached to it than that of making men ridiculous. It not only has this disadvantage with respect to ourselves, but it often shows us others in a very contemptible point of view. People are not soured by misfortune, but by the reception they meet with in it. When we do not want assistance, every one is ready to obtrude it on us, as if it were advice. If we do, they shun us instantly. They anticipate the increased demand on their sympathy or bounty, and escape from it as from a falling house. It is a mistake, however, that we court the society of the rich and prosperous, merely with a view to what we can get from them. We do so, because there is something in external rank and splendor that gratifies and imposes on the imagination; just as we prefer the company of those who are in good health and spirits to that of the sickly and hypochondrical, or as we would rather converse with a beautiful woman than with an ugly one. I never knew but one man who would lend his money freely and fearlessly in spite of circumstances (if you were likely to pay him, he grew peevish, and would pick a quarrel with you). I can only account for this from a certain sanguine buoyancy and magnificence of spirit, not deterred by distant consequences, or damped by untoward appearances. I have been told by those who shared of the same bounty, that it was not owing to generosity, but ostentation—if so, he kept his ostentation a secret from me, for I never received a hint or a look from which I could infer that I was not the lender, and he the person obliged. Neither was I expected to keep in the back-ground, or play an under part. On the contrary, I was encouraged to do my best; my dormant faculties roused, the ease of my circumstances was on condition of the freedom and independence of my mind, my lucky hits were applauded, and I was paid to shine. I am not ashamed of such patronage as this, nor do I regret any circumstance relating to it but its termination. People endure existence even in Paris; the rows of chairs on the Boulevards are gay with smiles and dress: the saloons are brilliant; at the theatre there is Mademoiselle Mars—what is all this to me? After a certain period, we live only in the past. Give me back one single evening at Boxhill, after a stroll in the deep-empurpled woods, before Bonaparte was yet beaten, "with wine of attic taste," when wit, beauty, friendship presided at the board! But no! Neither the time nor friends that are fled, can be recalled!—Poverty is the test of sincerity, the touchstone of civility. Even abroad, they treat you scurvily if your remittances do not arrive regularly, and though you have hitherto lived like a *Milord Anglais*. The want of money loses us friends not worth the keeping, mistresses who are naturally jilts or coquets; it cuts us out of society, to which dress and equipage are the only introduction; and deprives us of a number of luxuries and advantages of which the only good is, that they can only belong to the possessors of a large fortune. Many people are wretched because they have not money to buy a fine horse, or to hire a fine house, or to keep a carriage, or to purchase a diamond necklace, or to go to a raceball, or to give their servants new liveries. I cannot myself enter into all this. If I can *live to think, and think to live*, I am satisfied. Some want to possess pictures, others to collect libraries. All I wish is, sometimes, to see the one, and read the other. Gray was mortified because he had not a hundred pounds to bid for a curious library: and the Duchess of —— has immortalized herself by her liberality on that occasion, and by the handsome compliment she addressed to the poet, that "if it afforded him any satisfaction, she had been more than paid, by her pleasure in reading the 'Elegy in a Country Church-yard.'"

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* It is provoking enough, and makes one look like a fool, to receive a printed notice of a blank in the last lottery, with a postscript hoping for your future favors.

Literally and truly, one cannot get on well in the world without money. To be in want of it, is to pass through life with little credit or pleasure; it is to live out of the world, or to be despised if you come into it; it is not to be sent for to court, or asked out to dinner, or noticed in the street; it is not to have your opinion consulted, or else rejected with contempt, to have your acquirements carped at and doubted, your good things disparaged, and at last to lose the wit and the spirit to say them; it is to be scrutinized by strangers, and neglected by friends; it is to be a thrall to circumstances, an exile in one's own country; to forego leisure, freedom, ease of body and mind, to be dependent on the good-will and caprice of others, or earn a precarious and irksome livelihood by some laborious employment; it is to be compelled to stand behind a counter, or to sit at a desk in some public office, or to marry your landlady, or not the person you wish; or to go out to the

East or West-Indies, or to get a situation as judge abroad, and return home with a liver-complaint; or to be a law stationer, or a scrivener or scavenger, or newspaper reporter; or to read law and sit in court without a brief; or to be deprived of the use of your fingers by transcribing Greek manuscripts, or to be a seal-engraver and pore yourself blind; or to go upon the stage, or try some of the Fine Arts; with all your pains, anxiety, and hopes, most probably to fail, or, if you succeed, after the exertions of years, and undergoing constant distress of mind and fortune, to be assailed on every side with envy, back-biting, and falsehood, or to be a favorite with the public for a while, and then thrown into the back-ground—or a gaol, by the fickleness of taste and some new favorite—to be full of enthusiasm and extravagance in youth, of chagrin and disappointment in after-life; to be jostled by the rabble because you do not ride in your coach, or avoided by those who know your worth, and shrink from it as a claim on their respect or their purse; to be a burden to your relations, or unable to do anything for them; to be ashamed to venture into crowds; to have cold comfort at home; to lose by degrees your confidence and any talent you might possess; to grow crabbed, morose, and querulous, dissatisfied with every one, but most so with yourself; and plagued out of your life, to look about for a place to die in, and quit the world without any one's asking after your will. The *wiseacres* will possibly, however, crowd round your coffin, and raise a monument at a considerable expense, and after a lapse of time, to commemorate your genius and your misfortunes!

The only reason why I am disposed to envy the professions of the church or army is, that men can afford to be poor in them without being subjected to insult. A girl with a handsome fortune in a country town may marry a poor lieutenant without degrading herself. An officer is always a gentleman; a clergyman something more. Echard's book 'On the Contempt of the Clergy' is unfounded. It is surely sufficient for any set of individuals, raised above actual want, that their characters are not merely respectable, but sacred. Poverty, when it is voluntary, is never despicable, but takes an heroical aspect. What are the begging friars? Have they not put their base feet upon the necks of princes? Money as a luxury is valuable only as a passport to respect. It is one instrument of power. Where there are other admitted and ostensible claims to this, it becomes superfluous, and the neglect of it is even admired and looked up to as a mark of superiority over it. Even a strolling beggar is a popular character, who makes an open profession of his craft and calling, and who is neither worth a doit, nor in want of one. The Scotch are proverbially poor and proud: we know they can remedy their poverty when they set about it. No one is sorry for them. The French emigrants were formerly peculiarly situated in England. The priests were obnoxious to the common people on account of their religion; both they and the nobles, for their politics. Their poverty and dirt subjected them to many rebuffs; but their privations being voluntarily incurred, and also borne with the characteristic patience and good-humor of the nation, screened them from contempt. I little thought, when I used to meet them, walking out in the summer's-evenings, at Somers' Town, in their long great coats, their beards covered with snuff, and their eyes gleaming with mingled hope and regret in the rays of the setting sun, and regarded them with pity bordering on respect, as the last filmy vestige of the *ancien regime*, as shadows of loyalty and superstition still flitting about the earth and shortly to disappear from it for ever, that they would one day return over the bleeding corpse of their country, and sit like harpies, a polluted triumph, over the tomb of human liberty! To be a lord, a papist, and poor, is perhaps to some temperaments a consummation devoutly to be wished. There is all the subdued splendor of external rank, the pride of self-opinion, irritated and goaded on by petty privations and vulgar obloquy to a degree of morbid acuteness. Private and public annoyances must perpetually remind him of what he is, of what his ancestors were (a circumstance which might otherwise be forgotten); must narrow the circle of conscious dignity more and more, and the sense of personal worth and pretension must be exalted by habit and contrast into a refined abstraction—"pure in the last recesses of the mind"—unmixed with, or alloyed by "baser matter!"—It was an hypothesis of the late Mr. Thomas Wedgewood, that there is a principle of compensation in the human mind which equalizes all situations, and by which the absence of anything only gives us a more intense and intimate perception of the reality ; that insult adds to pride, that pain looks forward with ease to delight, that hunger already enjoys the unsavory morsel that is to save it from perishing ; that want is surrounded with imaginary riches, like the poor poet in Hogarth, who has a map of the mines of Peru hanging on his garret walls ; in short, that " we can hold a fire in our hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus "—but this hypothesis, though ingenious and to a certain point true, is to be admitted only in a limited and qualified sense.

There are two classes of people that I have observed who are not so distinct as might be imagined—those who cannot keep their own money in their hands, and those who cannot keep their hands from other people's. The first are always in want of money, though they do not know what they do with it. They *muddle* it away, without method or object, and without having anything to show for it. They have not, for instance, a fine house, but they hire two houses at a time ; they have not a hot-house in their garden, but a shrubbery within doors ; they do not gamble, but they purchase a library, and dispose of it when they move house. A princely benefactor provides them with lodgings, where, for a time, you are sure to find them at home : and they furnish them in a handsome style for those who are to come after them. With all this sieve-like economy, they can only afford a leg of mutton and a single bottle of wine, and are glad to get a lift in a common stage ; whereas, with a little management, and the same disbursements, they might entertain a round of company and drive a smart tilbury. But they set no value upon money, and throw it away on any object or in any manner that first presents itself, merely to have it off their hands, so that you wonder what has become of it. The second class above spoken of not only make away with what belongs to themselves, but you cannot keep anything you have from their rapacious grasp. If you refuse to lend them what you want, they insist that you *must :* if you let them have anything to take charge of for a time (a print or a bust) they swear that you have given it them, and that they have too great a regard for the donor ever to part with it. You express surprise at their having run so largely in debt ; but where is the singularity while others continue to lend ? And how is this to be helped, when the manner of these sturdy beggars amounts to dragooning you out of your money, and they will not go away without your purse, any more than if they came with a pistol in their hand? If a person has no delicacy, he has you in his power, for you necessarily feel some towards him; and since he will take no denial, you must comply with his peremptory demands, or send for a constable, which out of respect for his character you will not do. These persons are also poor—*light come, light go*—and the bubbles burst at last. Yet if they had employed the same time and pains in any laudable art or study that they have in raising a surreptitious livelihood, they would have been respectable, if not rich. It is their facility in borrowing money that has ruined them. No one will set heartily to work, who has the face to enter a strange house, ask the master of it for a considerable loan, on some plausible and pompous pretext, and walk off with it in his pocket. You might as well suspect a highwayman of addicting himself to hard study in the intervals of his profession.

There is only one other class of persons I can think of, in connection with the subject of this Essay—those who are always in the want of money from the want of spirit to make use of it. Such persons are perhaps more to be pitied than all the rest. They live in want in the midst of plenty—dare not touch what belongs to them, are afraid to say that their soul is their own, have their wealth locked up from them by fear and meanness as effectually as by bolts and bars, scarcely allowing themselves a coat to their backs or a morsel to eat, are in dread of coming to the parish all their lives, and are not sorry when they die, to think that they shall no longer be an expense to themselves—according to the old epigram:

"Here lies Father Clarges,
Who died to save charges."

ESSAY III.

On Sitting for One's Picture.

There is a pleasure in sitting for one's picture, which many persons are not aware of. People are coy on this subject at first, coquet with it, and pretend not to like it, as is the case with other venial indulgences, but they soon get over their scruples, and become resigned to their fate. There is a conscious vanity in it; and vanity is the *aurum potabile* in all our pleasures, the true *elixir* of human life. The sitter at first affects an air of indifference, throws himself into a slovenly or awkward position, like a clown when he goes a courting for the first time, but gradually recovers himself, attempts an attitude, and calls up his best looks, the moment he receives intimation that there is something about him that will do for a picture. The beggar in the street is proud to have his picture painted, and would almost sit for nothing: the finest lady in the land is as fond of sitting to a favorite artist as of seating herself before her looking-glass; and the more so, as the glass in this case is sensible of her charms, and does all it can to fix or heighten them. Kings lay aside their crowns to sit for their portraits, and poets their laurels to sit for their busts! I am sure, my father had as little vanity, and as little love for the art as most persons: yet when he had sat to me a few times (now some twenty years ago), he grew evidently uneasy when it was a fine day, that is, when the sun shone into the room, so that we could not paint; and when it became cloudy, began to bustle about, and ask me if I was not getting ready. Poor old room! Does the sun still shine into thee, or does Hope fling its colors round thy walls, gaudier than the rainbow? No, never, while thy oak-panels endure, will they inclose such fine movements of the brain as passed through mine, when the fresh hues of nature gleamed from the canvas, and my heart silently breathed the names of Rembrandt and Correggio! Between my father's love of sitting and mine of painting, we hit upon a tolerable likeness at last; but the picture is cracked and gone; and *Megilp* (that bane of the English school) has destroyed as fine an old Nonconformist head as one could hope to see in these degenerate times.

The fact is, that the having one's picture painted is like the creation of another self; and that is an idea, of the repetition or reduplication of which no man is ever tired, to the thousandth reflection. It has been said that lovers are never tired of each other's company, because they are always talking of themselves. This seems to be a bond of connexion (a delicate one it is!) between the painter and the sitter—they are always thinking and talking of the same thing, the picture, in which their self-love finds an equal counterpart. There is always something to be done or altered, that touches that sensitive cord—this feature was not exactly hit off, something is wanting to the nose or to the eyebrows, it may perhaps be as well to leave out this mark or that blemish, if it were possible to recal an expression that was remarked a short time before, it would be an indescribable advantage to the picture—a squint or a pimple on the face handsomely avoided may be a link of attachment ever after. He is no mean friend who conceals from ourselves, or only gently indicates, our obvious defects to the world. The sitter, by his repeated, minute, *fidgetty*, inquiries about himself may be supposed to take an indirect and laudable method of arriving at self-knowledge; and the artist, in self-defence, is obliged to cultivate a scrupulous tenderness towards the feelings of his sitter, lest he should appear in the character of a spy upon him. I do not conceive there is a stronger call upon secret gratitude than the having made a favorable likeness of any one; nor a surer ground of jealousy and dislike than the having failed in the attempt. A satire or a lampoon in writing is bad enough; but here we look doubly foolish, for we are ourselves parties to the plot, and have been at considerable pains to give evidence against ourselves. I have never had a plaster cast taken of myself: in truth, I rather shrink from the experiment; for I know I should be very much mortified if it did not turn out well, and should never forgive the unfortunate artist who had lent his assistance to prove that I looked like a blockhead!

The late Mr. Opie used to remark that the most sensible people made the best sitters; and I incline to his opinion, especially as I myself am an excellent sitter. Indeed, it seems to me a piece of mere impertinence not to sit as still as one can in these circumstances. I put the best face I can upon the matter, as well out of respect to the artist as to myself. I appear on my trial in the court of physiognomy, and am as anxious to make good a certain idea I have of myself, as if I were playing a part on a stage. I have no notion how people go to sleep, who are sitting for their pictures. It is an evident sign of want of thought and of internal resources. There are some individuals, all whose ideas are in their hands and feet—make them sit still, and you put a stop to the machine altogether. The volatile spirit of quicksilver in them turns to a *caput mortuum*. Children are particularly sensible of this constraint from their thoughtlessness and liveliness. It is the next thing with them to wearing the fool's-cap at school: yet they are proud of having their pictures taken, ask when they are to sit again, and are mightily pleased when they are done. Charles the First's children seem to have been good sitters, and the great dog sits like a Lord Chancellor.

The second time a person sits, and the view of the features is determined, the head seems fastened in an imaginary *vice*, and he can hardly tell what to make of his situation. He is continually overstepping the bounds of duty, and is tied down to certain lines and limits chalked out upon the canvas, to him "invisible or dimly seen" on the throne where he is exalted. The painter has now a difficult task to manage—to throw in his gentle admonitions, "A little more this way, sir," or "You bend rather too forward, madam,"—and ought to have a delicate white hand, that he may venture to adjust a straggling lock of hair, or by giving a slight turn to the head, co-operate in the practical attainment of a position. These are the ticklish and tiresome places of the work, before much progress is made, where the sitter grows peevish and abstracted, and the painter more anxious and particular than he was the day before. Now is the time to fling in a few adroit compliments, or to introduce general topics of conversation. The artist ought to be a well-informed and agreeable man—able to expatiate on his art, and abounding in lively and characteristic anecdotes. Yet he ought not to talk too much, or to grow too animated; or the picture is apt to stand still, and the sitter to be aware of it. Accordingly, the best talkers in the profession have not always been the most successful portrait-painters. For this purpose it is desirable to bring a friend, who may relieve guard, or fill up the pauses of conversation, occasioned by the necessary attention of the painter to his business, and by the involuntary reveries of the sitter on what his own likeness will bring forth; or a book, a newspaper, or a portfolio of prints may serve to amuse the time. When the sitter's face begins to flag, the artist may then properly start a fresh topic of discourse, and while his attention is fixed on the graces called out by the varying interest of the subject, and the model anticipates, pleased and smiling, their being transferred every moment to the canvas, nothing is wanting to improve and carry to its height the amicable understanding and mutual satisfaction and good-will subsisting between these two persons, so happily occupied with each other!

Sir Joshua must have had a fine time of it with his sitters. Lords, ladies, generals, authors, opera-singers, musicians, the learned and the polite, besieged his doors, and found an unfailing welcome. What a rustling of silk! What a fluttering of flounces and brocades! What a cloud of powder and perfumes! What a flow of periwigs! What an exchange of civilities and of titles! What a recognition of old friendships, and an introduction of new acquaintance and sitters! It must, I think, be allowed that this is the only mode in which genius can form a legitimate union with wealth and fashion. There is a secret and sufficient tie in interest and vanity. Abstract topics of wit or learning do not furnish a connecting link: but the painter, the sculptor, come in close contact with the persons of the Great. The lady of quality, the courtier, and the artist, meet and shake hands on this common ground; the latter exercises a sort of natural jurisdiction and dictatorial power over the pretensions of the first to external beauty and accomplishment, which produces a mild sense and tone of equality; and the opulent sitter pays the taker of flattering likenesses handsomely for his trouble, which does not lessen the sympathy between them. There is even a satisfaction in paying down a high price for a picture—it seems as if one's head was worth something!—During the first sitting, Sir Joshua did little but chat with the new candidate for the fame of portraiture, try an attitude, or remark an expression. His object was to gain time, by not being in haste to commit himself, until he was master of the subject before him. No one ever dropped in but the friends and acquaintance of the sitter—it was a rule with Sir Joshua that from the moment the latter entered, he was at home—the room belonged to him—but what secret whisperings would there be among these, what confidential, inaudible communications! It must be a refreshing moment, when the cake and wine had been handed round, and the artist began again. He, as it were, by this act of hospitality assumed a new character, and acquired a double claim to confidence and respect. In the mean time, the sitter would perhaps glance his eye round the room, and see a Titian or a Vandyke hanging in one corner, with a transient feeling of scepticism whether he should make such a picture. How the ladies of quality and fashion must bless themselves from being made to look like Dr. Johnson or Goldsmith! How proud the first of these would be, how happy the last, to fill the same arm-chair where the Bunburys and the Hornecks had sat! How superior the painter would feel to them all! By "happy alchemy of mind," he brought out all their good qualities and reconciled their defects, gave an air of studious ease to his learned friends, or lighted up the face of folly and fashion with intelligence and graceful smiles. Those portraits, however, that were most admired at the time, do not retain their pre-eminence now: the thought remains upon the brow, while the color has faded from the cheek, or the dress grown obsolete; and after all, Sir Joshua's best pictures are those of his worst sitters—*his Children.* They suited best with his unfinished style; and are like the infancy of the art itself, happy, bold, and careless. Sir Joshua formed the circle of his private friends from the *élite* of his sitters; and Vandyke was, it appears, on the same footing with his. When any of those noble or distinguished persons whom he has immortalised with his pencil, were sitting to him. he used to ask them to dinner, and afterwards it was their custom to return to the picture again, so that it is said that many of his finest portraits were done in this manner, ere the colors were yet dry, in the course of a single day. Oh! ephemeral works to last for ever!

Vandyke married a daughter of Earl Cowper, of whom there is a very beautiful picture. She was the Œnone, and he his own Paris. A painter of the name of Astley married a Lady ——, who sat to him for her picture. He was a wretched hand, but a fine person of a man, and a great coxcomb; and on his strutting up and down before the portrait when it was done with a prodigious air of satisfaction, she observed, "If he was so pleased with the copy, he might have the original." This Astley was a person of magnificent habits and a sumptuous taste in living; and is the same of whom the anecdote is recorded, that when some English students walking out near Rome were compelled by the heat to strip off their coats, Astley displayed a waistcoat with a huge waterfall streaming down the back of it, which was a piece of one of his own canvases that he had converted to this purpose. Sir Joshua fell in love with one of his fair sitters, a young and beautiful girl, who ran out one day in a great panic and confusion, hid her face in her companion's lap who was reading in an outer room, and said, "Sir Joshua had made her an offer!" This circumstance perhaps deserves mentioning the more, because there is a general idea that Sir Joshua Reynolds was a confirmed old bachelor. Goldsmith conceived a fruitless attachment to the same person, and addressed some passionate letters to her. Alas! it is the fate of genius to admire and to celebrate beauty, not to enjoy it! It is a fate, perhaps not without its compensations—

> "Had Petrarch gained his Laura for a wife,
> Would he have written Sonnets all his life?"

This distinguished beauty is still living, and handsomer than Sir Joshua's picture of her when a girl; and inveighs against the freedom of Lord Byron's pen with all the charming prudery of the last age.*

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* Sir Joshua may be thought to have studied the composition of his female portraits very coolly. There is a picture of his remaining of a Mrs. Symmons, who appears to have been a delicate beauty, pale, with a very little color in her cheeks: but then to set off this want of complexion, she is

The relation between the portrait-painter and his amiable sitters is one of established custom: but it is also one of metaphysical nicety, and is a running *double entendre*. The fixing an inquisitive gaze on beauty, the heightening a momentary grace, the dwelling on the heaven of an eye, the losing one's-self in the dimple of a chin, is a dangerous employment. The painter may chance to slide into the lover—the lover can hardly turn painter. The eye indeed grows critical, the hand is busy: but are the senses unmoved? We are employed to transfer living charms to an inanimate surface; but they may sink into the heart by the way, and the nerveless hand be unable to carry its luscious burthen any further. St. Preux wonders at the rash mortal who had dared to trace the features of his Julia; and accuses him of insensibility without reason. Perhaps he too had an enthusiasm and pleasures of his own! Mr. Burke, in his *Sublime and Beautiful*, has left a description of what he terms the most beautiful object in nature, the neck of a lovely and innocent female, which is written very much as if he had himself formerly painted this object, and sacrificed at this formidable shrine. There is no doubt that the perception of beauty becomes more exquisite ("till the sense aches at it") by being studied and refined upon as an object of art—it is at the same time fortunately neutralised by this means, or the painter would run mad. It is converted into an abstraction, an *ideal* thing, into something intermediate between nature and art, hovering between a living substance and a senseless shadow. The health and spirit that but now breathed from a speaking face, the next moment breathe with almost equal effect from a dull piece of canvas, and thus distract attention: the eye sparkles, the lips are moist there too; and if we can fancy the picture alive, the face in its turn fades into a picture, a mere object of sight. We take rapturous possession with one sense, the eye; but the artist's pencil acts as a non-conductor to the grosser desires. Besides, the sense of duty, of propriety interferes. It is not the question at issue: we have other work on our hands, and enough to do. Love is the product of ease and idleness: but

painted in a snow-white satin dress, there is a white marble pillar near her, a white cloud over her head, and by her side stands one white lily.

the painter has an anxious, feverish, never-ending task, to rival the beauty, to which he dare not aspire even in thought, or in a dream of bliss. Paints and brushes are not "amorous toys of light-winged Cupid;" a rising sigh evaporates in the aroma of some fine oil-color or varnish, a kindling blush is transfixed in a bed of vermilion on the palette. A blue vein meandering in a white wrist invites the hand to touch it: but it is better to proceed, and not spoil the picture. The ambiguity becomes more striking in painting from the naked figure. If the wonder occasioned by the object is greater, so is the despair of rivalling what we see. The sense of responsibility increases with the hope of creating an artificial splendor to match the real one. The display of unexpected charms foils our vanity, and mortifies passion. The painting *A Diana and Nymphs* is like plunging into a cold bath of desire: to make a statue of a *Venus* transforms the sculptor himself to stone. The snow on the lap of beauty freezes the soul. The heedless, unsuspecting licence of foreign manners gives the artist abroad an advantage over ours at home. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted only the head of Iphigene from a beautiful woman of quality: Canova had innocent girls to sit to him for his Graces. The Princess Borghese, whose symmetry of form was admirable, sat to him for a model, which he considered as his master-piece and the perfection of the female form; and when asked if she did not feel uncomfortable while it was taking, she replied with great indifference, "No: it was not cold!" I have but one other word to add on this part of the subject: if having to paint a delicate and modest female is a temptation to gallantry, on the other hand the sitting to a lady for one's picture is a still more trying situation, and amounts (almost of itself) to a declaration of love!

Landscape-painting is free from these tormenting dilemmas and embarrassments. It is as full of the feeling of pastoral simplicity and ease, as portrait-painting is of personal vanity and egotism. Away then with those incumbrances to the true liberty of thought—the sitter's chair, the bag-wig and sword, the drapery, the lay figure—and let us to some retired spot in the country, take out our portfolio, plant our easel, and begin. We are all at once shrouded from observation—

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot!"

We enjoy the cool shade with solitude and silence; or hear the dashing waterfall,

> "Or stock-dove plain amid the forest deep,
> That drowsy rustles to the sighing gale."

It seems almost a shame to do anything, we are so well content without it; but the eye is restless, and we must have something to show when we get home. We set to work, and failure or success prompts us to go on. We take up the pencil, or lay it down again, as we please. We muse or paint, as objects strike our senses or our reflection. The perfect leisure we feel turns labor to a luxury. We try to imitate the grey color of a rock or of the bark of a tree: the breeze wafted from its broad foliage gives us fresh spirits to proceed, we dip our pencil in the sky, or ask the white clouds sailing over its bosom to sit for their pictures. We are in no hurry, and have the day before us. Or else, escaping from the close-embowered scene, we catch fading distances on airy downs, and seize on golden sunsets with the fleecy flocks glittering in the evening ray, after a shower of rain has fallen. Or from Norwood's ridgy height, survey the snake-like Thames, or its smoke-crowned capital;

> "Think of its crimes, its cares, its pain,
> Then shield us in the woods again."

No one thinks of disturbing a landscape-painter at his task: he seems a kind of magician, the privileged genius of the place. Wherever a Claude, a Wilson has introduced his own portrait in the foreground of a picture, we look at it with interest (however ill it may be done) feeling that it is the portrait of one who was quite happy at the time, and how glad we should be to change places with him.

Mr. Burke has brought in a striking episode in one of his later works in allusion to Sir Joshua's portrait of Lord Keppel, with those of some other friends, painted in their better days. The portrait is indeed a fine one, worthy of the artist and the critic, and perhaps recalls Lord Keppel's memory oftener than any other circumstance at present does.* Portrait-painting is in truth a sort of cement of friendship, and a clue to history. That blockhead, Mr. C****r, of the Admiralty, the other day blundered upon some observations of mine relating to this subject, and made the House stare by asserting that portrait-painting was history or history portrait, as it happened; but went on to add, "That those gentlemen who had seen the ancient portraits lately exhibited in

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* "No man lives too long, who lives to do with spirit, and suffer with resignation, what Providence pleases to command or inflict: but indeed they are sharp incommodities which beset old age. It was but the other day, that in putting in order some things which had been brought here on my taking leave of London for ever, I looked over a number of fine portraits most of them of persons now dead, but whose society, in my better days, made this a proud and happy place. Amongst these was the picture of Lord Keppel. It was painted by an artist worthy of the subject, the excellent friend of that excellent man from their earliest youth, and a common friend of us both, with whom we lived for many years without a moment of coldness, of peevishness, of jealousy, or of jar, to the day of our final separation.

"I ever looked on Lord Keppel as one of the greatest and best men of his age; and I loved and cultivated him accordingly. He was much in my heart, and I believe I was in his to the very last beat. It was after his trial at Portsmouth that he gave me this picture. With what zeal and anxious affection I attended him through that his agony of glory; what part, my son, in early flush and enthusiasm of his virtue and the pious passion with which he attached himself to all my connexions, with what prodigality we both squandered ourselves in courting almost every sort of enmity for his sake, I believe he felt, just as I should have felt, such friendship on such an occasion."—*Letters to a Noble Lord*, p. 29, *second edition, printed by T. Williams.*

I have given this passage entire here, because I wish to be informed, if I could, what is the construction of the last sentence of it. It has puzzled me all my life. One difficulty might be got over by making a pause after "I believe he felt," and leaving out the comma between "have felt" and "such friendship," That is, the meaning would be, "I believe he felt with what zeal and anxious affection," &c., "just as I should have felt such friendship on such an occasion." But then again, what is to become of the "what part, my son?" &c. With what does this connect, or to what verb is "my son" the nominative case, or by what verb is "what part" governed? I should really be glad, if, from any manuscript, printed copy, or marginal correction, this point could be cleared up, and so fine a passage resolved, by any possible ellipsis, into ordinary grammar.

Pall-mall, must have been satisfied that they were strictly *historical;*" which showed that he knew nothing at all of the matter, but merely talked by rote. There was nothing historical in the generality of those portraits, except that they were portraits of people mentioned in history—there was no more of the spirit of history in them (which is *passion* or *action*) than in their dresses. But this is the way in which that person, by his pettifogging habits and literal understanding, always mistakes a verbal truism for sense, and a misnomer for wit! I was going to observe, that I think the aiding the recollection of our family and friends in our absence may be a frequent and strong inducement in sitting for our pictures; but that I believe the love of posthumous fame, or of continuing our memories after we are dead, has very little to do with it. And one reason I should give for that opinion is this, that we are not naturally very prone to dwell with pleasure on anything that may happen in relation to us after we are dead, because we are not fond of thinking of death at all. We shrink equally from the prospect of that fatal event as from any speculation on its consequences. The surviving ourselves in our pictures is but a poor compensation—it is rather adding mockery to calamity. The perpetuating our names in the wide page of history or to a remote posterity is a vague calculation, that may take out the immediate sting of mortality—whereas we ourselves may hope to last (by a fortunate extension of the term of human life) almost as long as an ordinary portrait; and the wounds of lacerated friendship it heals must be still green, and our ashes scarcely cold. I think therefore that the looking forward to this mode of keeping alive the memory of what we were by lifeless hues and discolored features, is not among the most approved consolations of human life, or favorite dalliances of the imagination. Yet I own I should like some part of me, as the hair or even nails, to be preserved entire, or I should have no objection to lie like Whitfield in a state of petrifaction. This smacks of the bodily reality at least—acts like a deception to the spectator, and breaks the fall from this "warm, kneaded motion to a clod"—from that to nothing—even to the person himself. I suspect that the idea of posthumous fame, which has so unwelcome a condition annexed to it, loses its general relish as we advance in life, and that it is only while we are young that we pamper our imaginations with this bait, with a sort of impunity. The reversion of immortality is then so distant, that we may talk of it without much fear of entering upon immediate possession: death is itself a fable—a sound that dies upon our lips; and the only certainty seems the only impossibility. Fame, at that romantic period, is the first thing in our mouths, and death the last in our thoughts.

ESSAY IV.

Whether genius is conscious of its powers.

No really great man ever thought himself so. The idea of greatness in the mind answers but ill to our knowledge—or to our ignorance of ourselves. What living prose-writer, for instance, would think of comparing himself with Burke? Yet would it not have been equal presumption or egotism in him to fancy himself equal to those who had gone before him—Bolingbroke or Johnson or Sir William Temple? Because his rank in letters is become a settled point with us, we conclude that it must have been quite as self-evident to him, and that he must have been perfectly conscious of his vast superiority to the rest of the world. Alas! not so. No man is truly himself, but in the idea which others entertain of him. The mind, as well as the eye, "sees not itself, but by reflection from some other thing." What parity can there be between the effect of habitual composition on the mind of the individual, and the surprise occasioned by first reading a fine passage in an admired author; between what we do with ease, and what we thought it next to impossible ever to be done; between the reverential awe we have for years encouraged, without seeing reason to alter it, for distinguished genius, and the slow, reluctant, unwelcome conviction that after infinite toil and repeated disappointments, and when it is too late and to little purpose, we have ourselves at length accomplished what we at first proposed; between the insignificance of our petty, personal pretensions, and the vastness and splendor which the atmosphere of imagination lends to an illustrious name? He who comes up to his own idea of greatness, must always have had a very low standard of it in his mind. "What a pity," said some one, "that Milton had not the pleasure of reading Paradise Lost!" He could not read it, as we do, with the weight of imression that a hundred years of admiration have added to it—"a phœnix gazed by all"—with the sense of the number of editions it has passed through with still increasing reputation, with the tone of solidity, time-proof, which it has received from the breath of cold, envious maligners, with the sound which the voice of Fame has lent to every line of it! The writer of an ephemeral production may be as much dazzled with it as the public; it may sparkle in his own eyes for a moment, and be soon forgotten by every one else. But no one can anticipate the suffrages of posterity. Every man, in judging of himself, is his own contemporary. He may feel the gale of popularity, but he cannot tell how long it will last. His opinion of himself wants distance, wants time, wants numbers, to set it off and confirm it. He must be indifferent to his own merits, before he can feel a confidence in them. Besides, every one must be sensible of a thousand weaknesses and deficiencies in himself; whereas Genius only leaves behind it the monuments of its strength. A great name is an abstraction of some one excellence: but whoever fancies himself an abstraction of excellence, so far from being great, may be sure that he is a blockhead, equally ignorant of excellence or defect, of himself or others. Mr. Burke, besides being the author of the *Reflections*, and the *Letter to a Noble Lord*, had a wife and son; and had to think as much about them as we do about him. The imagination gains nothing by the minute details of personal knowledge.

On the other hand, it may be said that no man knows so well as the author of any performance what it has cost him, and the length of time and study devoted to it. This is one, among other reasons, why no man can pronounce an opinion upon himself. The happiness of the result bears no proportion to the difficulties overcome or the pains taken. *Materiam superabat opus*, is an old and fatal complaint. The definition of genius is that it acts unconsciously; and those who have produced immortal works, have done so without knowing how or why. The greatest power operates unseen, and executes its appointed task with as little ostentation as difficulty. Whatever is done best, is done from the natural bent and disposition of the mind. It is only where our incapacity begins, that we begin to feel the obstacles, and to set an undue value on our triumph over them. Correggio, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt, did what they did without premeditation or effort—their works came from their minds as a natural birth—if you had asked them why they adopted this or that style, they would have answered, ***because they could not help it,*** and because they knew of no other. So Shakspeare says:

> "Our poesy is as a gum which issues
> From whence 'tis nourished. The fire i' th' flint
> Shows not till it be struck; our gentle flame
> Provokes itself; and, like the current, flies
> Each bound it chafes."

Shakspeare himself was an example of his own rule, and appears to have owed almost everything to chance, scarce anything to industry or design. His poetry flashes from him, like the lightning from the summer-cloud, or the stroke from the sun-flower. When we look at the admirable comic designs of Hogarth, they seem, from the unfinished state in which they are left, and from the freedom of the pencilling, to have cost him little trouble; whereas the *Sigismunda* is a very labored and comparatively feeble performance, and he accordingly set great store by it. He also thought highly of his portraits, and boasted that "he could paint equal to Vandyke, give him his time and let him choose his subject." This was the very reason why he could not. Vandyke's excellence consisted in this, that he could paint a fine portrait of any one at sight: let him take ever so much pains or choose ever so bad a subject, he could not help making something of it. His eye, his mind, his hand was cast in the mould of grace and delicacy. Milton again is understood to have preferred *Paradise Regained* to his other works. This, if so, was either because he himself was conscious of having failed in it; or because others thought he had. We are willing to think well of that which we know wants our favorable opinion, and to prop the ricketty bantling. Every step taken, *invitâ Minerva*, costs us something, and is set down to account; whereas we are borne on the full tide of genius and success into the very haven of our desires, almost imperceptibly. The strength of the impulse by which we are carried along prevents the sense of difficulty or resistance: the true inspiration of the Muse is soft and balmy as the air we breathe; and indeed, leaves us little to boast of, for the effect hardly seems to be our own.

There are two persons who always appear to me to have worked under this involuntary, silent impulse more than any others; I mean Rembrandt and Correggio. It is not known that Correggio ever saw a picture of any great master. He lived and died obscurely in an obscure village. We have few of his works, but they are all perfect. What truth, what grace, what angelic sweetness are there! Not one line or tone that is not divinely soft or exquisitely fair; the painter's mind rejecting, by a natural process, all that is discordant, coarse, or unpleasing. The whole is an emanation of pure thought. The work grew under his hand as if of itself, and came out without a flaw, like the diamond from the rock. He knew not what he did; and looked at each modest grace as it stole from the canvas with anxious delight and wonder. Ah! gracious God! not he alone; how many more in all time have looked at their works with the same feelings, not knowing but they too may have done something divine, immortal, and finding in that sole doubt ample amends for pining solitude, for want, neglect, and an untimely fate. Oh! for one hour of that uneasy rapture, when the mind first thinks it has struck out something that may last for ever; when the germ of excellence bursts from nothing on the startled sight! Take, take away the gaudy triumphs of the world, the long deathless shout of fame, and give back that heart-felt sigh with which the youthful enthusiast first weds immortality as his secret bride! And thou too, Rembrandt! who wert a man of genius, if ever painter was a man of genius, did this dream hang over you as you painted that strange picture of *Jacob's Ladder?* Did your eye strain over those gradual dusky clouds into futurity, or did those white-vested, beaked figures babble to you of fame as they approached? Did you know what you were about, or did you not paint much as it happened? Oh! if you had thought once about yourself, or anything but the subject, it would have been all over with "the glory, the intuition, the amenity," the dream had fled, the spell had been broken. The hills would not have looked like those we see in sleep—that tatterdemalion figure of Jacob, thrown on one side, would not have slept as if the breath was fairly taken out of his body. So much do Rembrandt's pictures savor of the soul and body of reality, that the thoughts seem identical with the objects—if there had been the least question what he should have done, or how he should do it, or how far he had succeeded, it would have spoiled everything. Lumps of light hung upon his pencil and fell upon his canvas like dew-drops: the shadowy veil was drawn over his backgrounds by the dull, obtuse finger of night, making darkness visible by still greater darkness that could only be felt!

Cervantes is another instance of a man of genius, whose work may be said to have sprung from his mind, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. Don Quixote and Sancho were a kind of twins; and the jests of the latter, as he says, fell from him like drops of rain when he least thought of it. Shakspeare's creations were more multiform, but equally natural and unstudied. Raphael and Milton seem partial exceptions to this rule. Their productions were of the *composite order;* and those of the latter sometimes even amount to centos. Accordingly, we find Milton quoted among those authors, who have left proofs of their entertaining a high opinion of themselves, and of cherishing a strong aspiration after fame. Some of Shakspeare's Sonnets have been also cited to the same purpose; but they seem rather to convey wayward and dissatisfied complaints of his untoward fortune than anything like a triumphant and confident reliance on his future renown. He appears to have stood more alone and to have thought less about himself than any living being. One reason for this difference may have been, that as a writer he was tolerably successful in his life-time, and no doubt produced his works with very great facility.

I hardly know whether to class Claude Lorraine as among those who succeeded most "through happiness or pains." It is certain that he imitated no one, and has had no successful imitator. The perfection of his landscapes seems to have been owing to an inherent quality of harmony, to an exquisite sense of delicacy in his mind. His monotony has been complained of, which is apparently produced from a preconceived idea in his mind; and not long ago I heard a person, not more distinguished for the subtilty than the *naïveté* of his sarcasms, remark, "Oh! I never look at Claude: if one has seen one of his pictures, one has seen them all; they are every one alike: there is the same sky, the same climate, the same time of day, the same tree, and that tree is like a cabbage. To be sure, they say he did pretty well; but when a man is always doing one thing, he ought to do it pretty well." There is no occasion to write the name under this criticism, and the best answer to it is that it is true—his pictures are always the same, but we never wish them to be otherwise. Perfection is one thing. I confess I think that Claude knew this, and felt that his were the finest landscapes in the world—that ever had been, or would ever be.

I am not in the humor to pursue this argument any further at present, but to write a digression. If the reader is not already apprised of it, he will please to take notice that I write this at Winterslow. My style there is apt to be redundant and excursive. At other times it may be cramped, dry, abrupt; but here it flows like a river, and overspreads its banks. I have not to seek for thoughts or hunt for images: they come of themselves, I inhale them with the breeze, and the silent groves are vocal with a thousand recollections—

"And visions, as poetic eyes avow,
Hang on each leaf, and cling to every bough."

Here I came fifteen years ago, a willing exile; and as I trod the lengthened greensward by the low wood-side, repeated the old line,

"My mind to me a kingdom is!"

I found it so then, before, and since; and shall I faint, now that I have poured out the spirit of that mind to the world, and treated many subjects with truth, with freedom, and power, because I have been followed with one cry of abuse ever since *for not being a government-tool?* Here I returned a few years after to finish some works I had undertaken, doubtful of the event, but determined to do my best; and wrote that character of Millimant, which was once transcribed by fingers fairer than Aurora's, but no notice was taken of it, because I was not a government-tool, and must be supposed devoid of taste and elegance by all who aspired to these qualities in their own persons. Here I sketched my account of that old honest Signior Orlando Friscobaldo, which with its fine, racy, acrid tone that old crab-apple, G*ff***d, would have relished or pretended to relish, had I been a government-tool! Here too I have written *Table-Talks* without number, and as yet without a falling off, till now that they are nearly done, or I should not make this boast. I could swear (were they not mine) the thoughts in many of them are founded as the rock, free as air, the tone like an Italian picture. What then? Had the style been like polished steel, as firm and as bright, it would have availed me nothing, for I am not a government-tool! I had endeavored to guide the taste of the English people to the best old English writers; but I had said that English Kings did not reign by right divine, and that his present majesty was descended from an elector of Hanover in a right line; and no loyal subject would after this look into Webster or Deckar because I had pointed them out. I had done something (more than any one except Schlegel) to vindicate the *Characters of Shakspeare's Plays* from the stigma of French criticism: but our Anti-Jacobin and Anti-Gallican writers soon found out that I had said and written that Frenchmen, Englishmen, men were not slaves by birth-right. This was enough to *damn* the work. Such has been the head and front of my offending. While my friend Leigh Hunt was writing the *Descent of Liberty*, and strewing the march of the Allied Sovereigns with flowers, I sat by the waters of Babylon and hung my harp upon the willows. I knew all along there was but one alternative—the cause of kings or of mankind. This I foresaw, this I feared; the world see it now, when it is too late. Therefore I lamented, and would take no comfort when the Mighty fell, because we, all men, fell with him, like lightning from heaven, to grovel in the grave of Liberty, in the style of Legitimacy! There is but one question in the hearts of monarchs, whether mankind are their property or not. There was but this one question in mine. I had made an abstract, metaphysical principle of this question. I was not the dupe of the voice of the charmers. By my hatred of tyrants I knew what their hatred of the free-born spirit of man must be, of the semblance, of the very name of Liberty and Humanity. And while others bowed their heads to the image of the BEAST, I spit upon it and buffeted it, and made mouths at it, and pointed at it, and drew aside the veil that then half concealed it, but has been since thrown off, and named it by its right name; and it is not to be supposed that my having penetrated their mystery would go unrequited by those whose delight the idol, half-brute, half-demon, was, and who are ashamed to acknowledge the image and superscription as their own! Two half-friends of mine, who would not make a whole one between them, agreed the other day that the indiscriminate, incessant abuse of what I write was mere prejudice and party-spirit, and that what I do in periodicals and without a name does well, pays well, and is "cried out upon in the top of the compass." It is this indeed that has saved my shallow skiff from quite foundering on Tory spite and rancor; for when people have been reading and approving an article in a miscellaneous journal, it does not do to say when they discover the author afterwards (whatever might have been the case before) it is written by a blockhead; and even Mr. Jerdan recommends the volume of CHARACTERISTICS as an excellent little work, because it has no cabalistic name in the title-page, and swears "there is a first-rate article of forty pages in the last number of the Edinburgh from Jeffrey's own hand," though when he learns against his will that it is mine, he devotes three successive numbers of the LITERARY GAZETTE to abuse "that *strange* article in the last number of the Edinburgh Review." Others who had not this advantage have fallen a sacrifice to the obloquy attached to the suspicion of doubting, or of being acquainted with any one who is known to doubt, the divinity of kings. Poor Keats paid the forfeit of this *lèze majesté* with his health and life. What, though his Verses were like the breath of spring, and many of his thoughts like flowers—would this, with the circle of critics that beset a throne, lessen the crime of their having been praised in the Examiner? The lively and most agreeable Editor of that paper has in like manner been driven from his country and his friends who delighted in him, for no other reason than having written the story of Rimini, and asserted ten years ago, "that the most accomplished prince in Europe was an Adonis of fifty!"

> "Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,
> That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse!"

I look out of my window and see that a shower has just fallen: the fields look green after it, and a rosy cloud hangs over the brow of the hill; a lily expands its petals in the moisture, dressed in its lovely green and white; a shepherd-boy has just brought some pieces of turf with daisies and grass for his young mistress to make a bed for her sky-lark, not doomed to dip his wings in the dappled dawn—my cloudy thoughts drawn off, the storm of angry politics has blown over—Mr. Blackwood, I am yours—Mr. Croker, my service to you—Mr. T. Moore, I am alive and well—really, it is wonderful how little the worse I am for fifteen years' wear and tear, how I come upon my legs again on the ground of truth and nature, and "look abroad into universality," forgetting that there is any such person as myself in the world!

I have let this passage stand (however critical) because it may serve as a practical illustration to show what authors really think of themselves when put upon the defensive—(I confess, the subject has nothing to do with the title at the head of the Essay!)—and as a warning to those who may reckon upon their fair proportion of popularity as the reward of the exercise of an independent spirit and such talents as they possess. It sometimes seems at first sight as if the low scurrility and jargon of abuse by which it is attempted to overlay all common sense and decency by a tissue of lies and nicknames, everlastingly repeated and applied indiscriminately to all those who are not of the regular government-party, was peculiar to the present time, and the anomalous growth of modern criticism; but if we look back, we shall find the same system acted upon, as often as power, prejudice, dulness, and spite found their account in playing the game into one another's hands—in decrying popular efforts, and in giving currency to every species of base metal that had their own conventional stamp upon it. The names of Pope and Dryden were assailed with daily and unsparing abuse—the epithet A. P. E. was levelled at the sacred head of the former—and if even men like these, having to deal with the consciousness of their own infirmities and the insolence and spurns of wanton enmity, must have found it hard to possess their souls in patience, any living writer amidst such contradictory evidence can scarcely expect to retain much calm, steady conviction of his own merits, or build himself a secure reversion in immortality.

However one may in a fit of spleen and impatience turn round and assert one's claims in the face of low-bred, hireling malice, I will here repeat what I set out with saying, that there never yet was a man of sense and proper spirit, who would not decline rather than court a comparison with any of those names, whose reputation he really emulates—who would not be sorry to suppose that any of the great heirs of memory had as many foibles as he knows himself to possess—and who would not shrink from including himself or being included by others in the same praise, that was offered to long-established and universally acknowledged merit, as a kind of profanation. Those who are ready to fancy themselves Raphaels and Homers are very inferior men indeed—they have not even an idea of the mighty names that "they take in vain." They are as deficient in pride as in modesty, and have not so much as served an apprenticeship to a true and honorable ambition. They mistake a momentary popularity for lasting renown, and a sanguine temperament for the inspirations of genius. The love of fame is too high and delicate a feeling in the mind to be mixed up with realities—it is a solitary abstraction, the secret sigh of the soul—

> "It is all one as we should love
> A bright particular star, and think to wed it."

A name "fast-anchored in the deep abyss of time" is like a star twinkling in the firmament, cold, silent, distant, but eternal and sublime; and our transmitting one to posterity is as if we should contemplate our translation to the skies. If we are not contented with this feeling on the subject, we shall never sit in Cassiopeia's chair, nor will our names, studding Ariadne's crown or streaming with Berenice's locks, ever make

> "the face of heaven so bright
> That birds shall sing, and think it were not night."

Those who are in love only with noise and show, instead of devoting themselves to a life of study, had better hire a booth at Bartlemy-Fair, or march at the head of a recruiting regiment with drums beating and colors flying!

It has been urged, that however little we may be disposed to indulge the reflection at other times or out of mere self-complacency, yet the mind cannot help being conscious of the effort required for any great work while it is about it, of

> "The high endeavor and the glad success."

I grant that there is a sense of power in such cases, with the exception before stated; but then this very effort and state of excitement engrosses the mind at the time, and leaves it listless and exhausted afterwards. The energy we exert, or the high state of enjoyment we feel, puts us out of conceit with ourselves at other times: compared to what we are in the act of composition, we seem dull, common-place people, generally speaking; and what we have been able to perform is rather matter of wonder than of self-congratulation to us. The stimulus of writing is like the stimulus of intoxication, with which we can hardly sympathize in our sober moments, when we are no longer under the inspiration of the demon, or when the virtue is gone out of us. While we are engaged in any work, we are thinking of the subject, and cannot stop to admire ourselves; and when it is done, we look at it with comparative indifference. I will venture to say, that no one but a pedant ever read his own works regularly through. They are not *his*—they are become mere words, waste-paper, and have none of the glow, the creative enthusiasm, the vehemence, and natural spirit with which he wrote them. When we have once committed our thoughts to paper, written them fairly out, and seen that they are right in the printing, if we are in our right wits, we have done with them for ever. I sometimes try to read an article I have written in some magazine or review—(for when they are bound up in a volume, I dread the very sight of them)—but stop after a sentence or two and never recur to the task. I know pretty well what I have to say on the subject, and do not want to go to school to myself. It is the worst instance of the *bis repetita crambe* in the world. I do not think that even painters have much delight in looking at their works after they are done. While they are in progress, there is a great degree of satisfaction in considering what has been done, or what is still to do—but this is hope, is reverie, and ceases with the completion of our efforts. I should not imagine Raphael or Correggio would have much pleasure in looking at their former works, though they might recollect the pleasure they had had in painting them; they might spy defects in them (for the idea of unattainable perfection still keeps pace with our actual approaches to it), and fancy that they were not worthy of immortality. The greatest portrait-painter the world ever saw used to write under his pictures, "*Titianus faciebat*," signifying that they were imperfect; and in his letter to Charles V. accompanying one of his most admired works, he only spoke of the time he had been about it. Annibal Caracci boasted that he could do like Titian and Correggio, and, like most boasters, was wrong. (*See his spirited Letter to his cousin Ludovico, on seeing the pictures at Parma.*)

The greatest pleasure in life is that of reading, while we are young. I have had as much of this pleasure as perhaps any one. As I grow older, it fades; or else, the stronger stimulus of writing takes off the edge of it. At present, I have neither time nor inclination for it: yet I should like to devote a year's entire leisure to a course of the English Novelists; and perhaps clap on that old sly knave, Sir Walter, to the end of the list. It is astonishing how I used formerly to relish the style of certain authors, at a time when I myself despaired of ever writing a single line. Probably this was the reason. It is in mental as in natural ascent—intellectual objects seem higher when we survey them from below, than when we look down from any given elevation above the common level. My three favorite writers about the time I speak of were Burke, Junius, and Rousseau. I was never weary of admiring and wondering at the felicities of the style, the turns of expression, the refinements of thought and sentiment: I laid the book down to find out the secret of so much strength and beauty, and took it up again in despair, to read on and admire

So I passed whole days, months, and I may add, years; and have only this to say now, that as my life began, so I could wish that it may end. The last time I tasted this luxury in its full perfection was one day after a sultry day's walk in summer between Farnham and Alton. I was fairly tired out; I walked into an inn-yard (I think at the latter place); I was shown by the waiter to what looked at first like common out-houses at the other end of it, but they turned out to be a suite of rooms, probably a hundred years old—the one I entered opened into an old-fashioned garden, embellished with beds of larkspur and a leaden Mercury; it was wainscoted, and there was a grave-looking, dark-colored portrait of Charles II. hanging up over the tiled chimney-piece. I had "*Love for Love*" in my pocket, and began to read; coffee was brought in, in a silver coffee-pot; the cream, the bread and butter, everything was excellent, and the flavor of Congreve's style prevailed over all. I prolonged the entertainment til a late hour, and relished this divine comedy better even than when I used to see it played by Miss Mellon, as *Miss Prue;* Bob Palmer, as *Tattle;* and Bannister, as honest *Ben.* This circumstance happened just five years ago, and it seems like yesterday. If I count my life so by lustres, it will soon glide away; yet I shall not have to repine, if, while it lasts, it is enriched with a few such recollections!

ESSAY V.

On Londoners and Country People.

I do not agree with Mr. ***Blackwood*** in his definition of the word *Cockney.* He means by it a person who has happened at any time to live in London, and who is not a Tory—I mean by it a person who has never lived out of London, and who has got all his ideas from it.

The true Cockney has never travelled beyond the purlieus of the Metropolis, either in the body or the spirit. Primrose-hill is the Ultima Thule of his most romantic desires; Greenwich Park stands him in stead of the Vales of Arcady. Time and space are lost to him. He is confined to one spot, and to the present moment. He sees everything near, superficial, little, in hasty succession. The world turns round, and his head with it, like a roundabout at a fair, till he becomes stunned and giddy with the motion. Figures glide by, as in a *camera obscura.* There is a glare, a perpetual hubbub, a noise, a crowd about him; he sees and hears a vast number of things, and knows nothing. He is pert, raw, ignorant, conceited, ridiculous, shallow, contemptible. His senses keep him alive; and he knows, inquires, and cares for nothing farther. He meets the Lord Mayor's coach, and without ceremony treats himself to an imaginary ride in it. He notices the people going to court or to a city-feast, and is quite satisfied with the show. He takes the wall of a Lord, and fancies himself as good as he. He sees an infinite quantity of people pass along the street, and thinks there is no such thing as life or a knowledge of character to be found out of London. "Beyond Hyde Park all is a desert to him." He despises the country, because he is ignorant of it, and the town, because he is familiar with it. He is as well acquainted with St. Paul's as if he had built it, and talks of Westminster Abbey and Poets' Corner with great indifference.

The King, the House of Lords and Commons are his very good friends. He knows the members for Westminster or the City by sight, and bows to the Sheriffs or the Sheriffs' men. He is hand and glove with the Chairman of some Committee. He is, in short, a great man by proxy, and comes so often in contact with fine persons and things, that he rubs off a little of the gilding, and is surcharged with a sort of second-hand, vapid, tingling, troublesome self-importance. His personal vanity is thus continually flattered and perked up into ridiculous self-complacency, while his imagination is jaded and impaired by daily misuse. Everything is vulgarised in his mind. Nothing dwells long enough on it to produce an interest; nothing is contemplated sufficiently at a distance to excite curiosity or wonder. *Your true Cockney is your only true leveller.* Let him be as low as he will, he fancies he is as good as anybody else. He has no respect for himself, and still less (if possible) for you. He cares little about his own advantages, if he can only make a jest at yours. Every feeling comes to him through a medium of levity and impertinence; nor does he like to have this habit of mind disturbed by being brought into collision with anything serious or respectable. He despairs (in such a crowd of competitors) of distinguishing himself, bu laughs heartily at the idea of being able to trip up the heels of other people's pretensions. A Cockney feels no gratitude. This is a first principle with him. He regards any obligation you confer upon him as a species of imposition, a ludicrous assumption of fancied superiority. He talks about everything, for he has heard something about it; and understanding nothing of the matter, concludes he has as good a right as you. He is a politician; for he has seen the Parliament House: he is a critic; because he knows the principal actors by sight—has a taste for music, because he belongs to a glee-club at the West End, and is gallant, in virtue of sometimes frequenting the lobbies at half-price. A mere Londoner, in fact, from the opportunities he has of knowing something of a number of objects (and those striking ones) fancies himself a sort of privileged person; remains satisfied with the assumption of merits, so much the more unquestionable as they are not his own; and from being dazzled with noise, show, and appearances, is less capable of giving a real opinion, or entering into any subject than the meanest peasant. There are greater lawyers, orators, painters, philosophers, poets, players in London, than in any other part of the United Kingdom: he is a Londoner, and therefore it would be strange if he did not know more of law, eloquence, art, philosophy, poetry, acting, than any one without his local advantages, and who is merely from the country. This is a *non sequitur;* and it constantly appears so when put to the test.

A real Cockney is the poorest creature in the world, the most literal, the most mechanical, and yet he too lives in a world of romance—a fairy-land of his own. He is a citizen of London; and this abstraction leads his imagination the finest dance in the world. London is the first city in the habitable globe; and therefore he must be superior to every one who lives out of it. There are more people in London than anywhere else; and though a dwarf in stature, his person swells out and expands into *ideal* importance and borrowed magnitude. He resides in a garret or in a two pair of stairs' back room; yet he talks of the magnificence of London, and gives himself airs of consequence upon it, as if all the houses in Portman or in Grosvenor Square were his by right or in reversion. "He is owner of all he surveys." The Monument, the Tower of London, St. James's Palace, the Mansion House, White-Hall, are part and parcel of his being. Let us suppose him to be a lawyer's clerk at half-a-guinea a week: but he knows the Inns of Court, the Temple Gardens, and Gray's-Inn Passage—sees the lawyers in their wigs walking up and down Chancery Lane, and has advanced within half-a-dozen yards of the Chancellor's chair:—who can doubt that he understands (by implication) every point of the law (however intricate) better than the most expert country practitioner? He is a shopman, and nailed all day behind the counter: but he sees hundreds and thousands of gay, well-dressed people pass—an endless phantasmagoria—and enjoys their liberty and gaudy fluttering pride. He is a footman—but he rides behind beauty, through a crowd of carriages, and visits a thousand shops. Is he a tailor—that last infirmity of human nature? The stigma on his profession is lost in the elegance of the patterns he provides, and of the persons he adorns; and he is something very different from a mere country botcher. Nay, the very scavenger and nightman thinks the dirt in the street has something precious in it, and his employment is solemn, silent, sacred, peculiar to London! A *barker* in Monmouth Street, a slop-seller in Radcliffe Highway, a tapster at a night-cellar, a beggar in St. Giles's, a drab in Fleet-Ditch, live in the eye of millions, and eke out a dreary, wretched, scanty, or loathsome existence from the gorgeous, busy, glowing scene around them. It is a common saying, among such persons, that "they had rather be hanged in London, than die a natural death out of it anywhere else"—Such is the force of habit and imagination. Even the eye of childhood is dazzled and delighted with the polished splendor of the jewellers' shops, the neatness of the turnery ware, the festoons of artificial flowers, the confectionery, the chemists' shops, the lamps, the horses, the carriages, the sedan-chairs: to this was formerly added a set of traditional associations—Whittington and his Cat, Guy Faux and the Gunpowder Treason, the Fire and the Plague of London, and the Heads of the Scotch Rebels that were stuck on Temple Bar in 1745. These have vanished, and in their stead the curious and romantic eye must be content to pore in Pennant for the site of old London-Wall, or to peruse the sentimental mile-stone that marks the distance to the place "where Hickes's Hall formerly stood!"

The *Cockney* lives in a go-cart of local prejudices and positive illusions; and when he is turned out of it, he hardly knows how to stand or move. He ventures through Hyde Park Corner, as a cat crosses a gutter. The trees pass by the coach very oddly. The country has a strange blank appearance. It is not lined with houses all the way, like London. He comes to places he never saw or heard of. He finds the world is bigger than he thought for. He might have dropped from the moon, for anything he knows of the matter. He is mightily disposed to laugh, but is half afraid of making some blunder. Between sheepishness and conceit, he is in a very ludicrous situation. He finds that the people walk on two legs, and wonders to hear them talk a dialect so different from his own. He perceives London fashions have got down into the country before him, and that some of the better sort are dressed as well as he is. A drove of pigs or cattle stopping the road is a very troublesome interruption. A crow in a field, a magpie in a hedge, are to him very odd animals—he can't tell what to make of them, or how they live. He does not altogether like the accommodations at the inns—it is not what he has been used to in town. He begins to be communicative—says he was "born within the sound of Bow-bell," and attempts some jokes, at which nobody laughs. He asks the coachman a question, to which he receives no answer. All this is to him very unaccountable and unexpected. He arrives at his journey's end; and instead of being the great man he anticipated among his friends and country relations, finds that they are barely civil to him, or make a butt of him; have topics of their own which he is as completely ignorant of as they are indifferent to what he says, so that he is glad to get back to London again, where he meets with his favorite indulgences and associates, and fancies the whole world is occupied with what he hears and sees.

A Cockney loves a tea-garden in summer, as he loves the play or the Cider-Cellar in winter—where he sweetens the air with the fumes of tobacco, and makes it echo to the sound of his own voice. This kind of suburban retreat is a most agreeable relief to the close and confined air of a city life. The imagination, long pent up behind a counter or between brick walls, with noisome smells, and dingy objects, cannot bear at once to launch into the boundless expanse of the country, but "shorter excursions tries," coveting something between the two, and finding it at White-Conduit House, or the Rosemary Branch, or Bagnigge Wells. The landlady is seen at a bow-window in near perspective, with punch-bowls and lemons disposed orderly around—the lime-trees or poplars wave overhead to "catch the breezy air," through which, typical of the huge dense cloud that hangs over the metropolis, curls up the thin, blue, odoriferous vapor of Virginia or Oronooko—the benches are ranged in rows, the fields and hedge-rows spread out their verdure; Hampstead and Highgate are seen in the back-ground, and contain the imagination within gentle limits—here the holiday people are playing ball; here they are playing bowls—here they are quaffing ale, there sipping tea—here the loud wager is heard, there the political debate. In a sequestered nook a slender youth with purple face and droop ing head, nodding over a glass of gin toddy, breathes in tender accents—"There's naught so sweet on earth as Love's young dream;" while "Rosy Ann" takes its turn, and "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled" is thundered forth in accents that might wake the dead. In another part sit carpers and critics, who dispute the score of the reckoning or the game, or cavil at the taste and execution of the *would-be* Brahams and Durusets. Of this latter class was Dr. Goodman, a man of other times—I mean of those of Smollet and Defoe—who was curious in opinion, obstinate in the wrong, great in little things, and inveterate in petty warfare. I vow he held me an argument once "an hour by St. Dunstan's clock," while I held an umbrella over his head (the friendly protection of which he was unwilling to quit to walk in the rain to Camberwell) to prove to me that Richard Pinch was neither a fives-player nor a pleasing singer. "Sir," said he, "I deny that Mr. Pinch plays the game. He is a cunning player, but not a good one. I grant his tricks, his little mean dirty ways, but he is not a manly antagonist. He has no hit, and no left-hand. How then can he set up for a superior player? And then as to his always striking the ball against the side wings at Copenhagen-house, Cavanagh, sir, used to say, 'The wall was made to hit at!' I have no patience with such pitiful shifts and advantages. They are an insult upon so fine and athletic a game! And as to his setting up for a singer, it's quite ridiculous. You know, Mr. H——, that to be a really excellent singer, a man must lay claim to one of two things; in the first place, sir, he must have a naturally fine ear for music, or secondly, an early education, exclusively devoted to that study. But no one ever suspected Mr. Pinch of refined sensibility; and his education, as we all know, has been a little at large. Then again, why should he of all other things be always singing 'Rosy Ann,' and 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' till one is sick of hearing them? It's preposterous, and I mean to tell him so. You know, I am sure, without my hinting it, that in the first of these admired songs, the sentiment is voluptuous and tender, and in the last patriotic. Now Pinch's romance never wandered from behind his counter, and his patriotism lies in his breeches' pocket. Sir, the utmost he should aspire to would be to play upon the Jews' harp!" This story of the Jews' harp tickled some of Pinch's friends, who gave him various hints of it, which nearly drove him mad, till he discovered what it was; for though no jest or sarcasm ever had the least effect upon him, yet he cannot bear to think that there should be any joke of this kind about him, and he not in the secret: it makes against that *knowing* character which he so much affects. Pinch is in one respect a complete specimen of a *Cockney*. He never has anything to say, and yet is never at a loss for an answer. That is, his pertness keeps exact pace with his dulness. His friend, the Doctor, used to complain of this in good set terms.—"You can never make anything of Mr. Pinch," he would say. "Apply the most cutting remark to him, and his only answer is, '*The same to you, sir.*' If Shakspeare were to rise from the dead to confute him, I firmly believe it would be to no purpose. I assure you, I have found it so. I once thought indeed I had him at a disadvantage, but I was mistaken. You shall hear, sir. I had been reading the following sentiment in a modern play—'The Road to Ruin,' by the late Mr. Holcroft—'For how should the soul of Socrates inhabit the body of a stocking-weaver?' This was pat to the point (you know our friend is a hosier and haberdasher). I came full with it to keep an appointment I had with Pinch, began a game, quarrelled with him in the middle of it on purpose, went up stairs to dress, and as I was washing my hands in the slop-basin (watching my opportunity) turned coolly round and said, 'It's impossible there should be any sympathy between you and me, Mr. Pinch: for as the poet says, how should the soul of Socrates inhabit the body of a stocking-weaver?' 'Ay,' says he, 'does the poet say so? *then the same to you*, sir!' I was confounded, I gave up the attempt to conquer him in wit or argument. He would pose the Devil, sir, by his '*The same to you, sir.*'" We had another joke against Richard Pinch, to which the Doctor was not a party, which was, that being asked after the respectability of the *Hole in the Wall*, at the time that Randall took it, he answered quite unconsciously. "Oh! it's a very genteel place, I go there myself sometimes!" Dr. Goodman was descended by the mother's side from the poet Jago, was a private gentleman in town, and a medical dilettanti in the country, dividing his time equally between business and pleasure; had an inexhaustible flow of words, and an imperturbable vanity, and held "stout notions on the metaphysical score." He maintained the free agency of man, with the spirit of a martyr and the gaiety of a man of wit and pleasure about town—told me he had a curious tract on that subject by A. C. (Anthony Collins) which he carefully locked up in his box, lest any one should see it but himself, to the detriment of the character and morals, and put it to me whether it was not hard, on the principles of *philosophical necessity*, for a man to come to be hanged? To which I replied, "I thought it hard on any terms!" A knavish *marker*, who had listened to the dispute, laughed at this retort, and seemed to assent to the truth of it, supposing it might one day be his own case.

Mr. Smith and the Brangtons, in "Evelina," are the finest possible examples of the spirit of *Cockneyism*. I once knew a linen-draper in the City, who owned to me he did not quite like this part of Miss Burney's novel. He said, "I myself lodge in a first floor, where there are young ladies in the house: they sometimes have company, and if I am out, they ask me to lend them the use of my apartment, which I readily do out of politeness, or if it is an agreeable party, I perhaps join them. All this is so like what passes in the novel, that I fancy myself a sort of second Mr. Smith, and am not quite easy at it!" This was mentioned to the fair Authoress, and she was delighted to find that her characters were so true, that an actual person fancied himself to be one of them. The resemblance, however, was only in the externals; and the real modesty of the individual stumbled on the likeness to a city coxcomb!

It is curious to what degree persons, brought up in certain occupations in a great city, are shut up from a knowledge of the world, and carry their simplicity to a pitch of unheard-of extravagance. London is the only place in which the child grows completely up into the man. I have known characters of this kind, which, in the way of childish ignorance and self-pleasing delusion, exceeded anything to be met with in Shakspeare or Ben Jonson, or the old comedy. For instance, the following may be taken as a true sketch. Imagine a person with a florid, shining complexion like a plough-boy, large staring teeth, a merry eye, his hair stuck into the fashion with curling-irons and pomatum, a slender figure, and a decent suit of black—add to which the thoughtlessness of the school-boy, the forwardness of the thriving tradesman, and the plenary consciousness of the citizen of London—and you have Mr. Dunster before you, the fishmonger in the Poultry. You shall hear how he chirps over his cups, and exults in his private opinions. "I'll play no more with you," I said, "Mr. Dunster—you are five points in the game better than I am." I had just lost three half-crown rubbers at cribbage to him, which loss of mine he presently thrust into a canvas pouch (not a silk purse) out of which he had produced just before, first a few halfpence, then half a dozen pieces of silver, then a handful of guineas, and lastly, lying *perdu* at the bottom, a fifty-pound banknote. "I'll tell you what," I said, "I should like to play you a game at marbles"—this was a sort of Christmas party or Twelfth Night merry-making. "Marbles!" said Dunster, catching up the sound, and his eye brightening with childish glee, "What! you mean *ring-taw?*" "Yes." "I should beat you at it to a certainty. I was one of the best in our school (it was at Clapham, sir, the Rev. Mr. Denman's, at Clapham, was the place where I was brought up) though there were two others there better than me. They were the best that ever were. I'll tell you, sir, I'll give you an idea. There was a water-butt or cistern, sir, at our school, that turned with a cock. Now suppose that brass-ring which the window-curtain is fastened to, to be the cock, and that these boys were standing where we are, about twenty feet off—well, sir, I'll tell you what I have seen them do. One of them had a favorite taw (or *alley* we used to call them); he'd take aim at the cock of the cistern with this marble, as I may do now. Well, sir, will you believe it? such was his strength of knuckle and certainty of aim, he'd hit it, turn it, let the water out, and then, sir, when the water had run out as much as it wanted, the other boy (he'd just the same strength of knuckle, and the same certainty of eye) he'd aim at it too, be sure to hit it, turn it round, and stop the water from running out. Yes, what I tell you is very remarkable, but it's true. One of these boys was named Cock, and t' other Butler." "They might have been named Spigot and Fawcett, my dear sir, from your account of them." "I should not mind playing you at fives neither, though I'm out of practice. I think I should beat you in a week: I was a real good one at that. A pretty game, sir! I had the finest ball that I suppose ever was seen. Made it myself, I'll tell you how, sir. You see, I put a piece of cork at the bottom, then I wound some fine worsted yarn round it, then I had to bind it round with some packthread, and then sew the case on. You'd hardly believe it, but I was the envy of the whole school for that ball. They all wanted to get it from me, but lord, sir, I would let none of them come near it. I kept it in my waistcoat pocket all day, and at night I used to take it to bed with me and put it under my pillow. I could n't sleep easy without it."

The same idle vein might be found in the country, but I doubt whether it would find a tongue to give it utterance. Cockneyism is a ground of native shallowness mounted with pertness and conceit. Yet with all this simplicity and extravagance in dilating on his favorite topics, Dunster is a man of spirit, of attention to business, knows how to make out and get in his bills, and is far from being hen-pecked. One thing is certain, that such a man must be a true Englishman and a loyal subject. He has a slight tinge of letters, with shame I confess it—has in his possession a volume of the European Magazine for the year 1761, and is an humble admirer of Tristram Shandy (particularly the story of the King of Bohemia and his Seven Castles, which is something in his own endless manner) and of Gil Blas of Santillane. Over these (the last thing before he goes to bed at night) he smokes a pipe, and meditates for an hour. After all, what is there in these harmless half-lies, these fantastic exaggerations, but a literal, prosaic, *Cockney* translation of the admired lines in Gray's Ode to Eton College:—

"What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed
Or urge the flying ball?"

A man shut up all his life in his shop, without anything to interes him from one year's end to another but the cares and details of business, with scarcely any intercourse with books or opportunities for society, distracted with the buzz and glare and noise about him, turns for relief to the retrospect of his childish years; and there, through the long vista, at one bright loop-hole, leading out of the thorny mazes of the world into the clear morning light, he sees the idle fancies and gay amusements of his boyhood dancing like motes in the sunshine. Shall we blame or shall we laugh at him, if his eye glistens, and his tongue grows wanton in their praise?

None but a Scotchman would—that pragmatical sort of personage, who thinks it a folly ever to have been young, and who, instead of dallying with the frail past, bends his brows upon the future, and looks only to the *main-chance.* Forgive me, dear Dunster, if I have drawn a sketch of some of thy venial foibles, and delivered thee into the hands of these Cockneys of the North, who will fall upon thee and devour thee, like so many cannibals, without a grain of salt!

If familiarities in cities breed contempt, ignorance in the country breeds aversion and dislike. People come too much in contact in town: in other places they live too much apart, to unite cordially and easily. Our feelings, in the former case, are dissipated and exhausted by being called into constant and vain activity; in the latter they rust and grow dead for want of use. If there is an air of levity and indifference in London manners, there is a harshness, a moroseness, and disagreeable restraint in those of the country. We have little disposition to sympathy, when we have few persons to sympathize with: we lose the relish and capacity for social enjoyment the seldomer we meet. A habit of sullenness, coldness, and misanthropy grows upon us. If we look for hospitality and a cheerful welcome in country places, it must be in those where the arrival of a stranger is an event, the recurrence of which need not be greatly apprehended, or it must be on rare occasions, on "some high festival of once a year." Then indeed the stream of hospitality, so long dammed up, may flow without stint for a short season; or a stranger may be expected with the same sort of eager impatience as a caravan of wild beasts, or any other natural curiosity, that excites our wonder and fills up the craving of the mind after novelty. By degrees, however, even this last principle loses its effect: books, newspapers, whatever carries us out of ourselves into a world of which we see and know nothing, become distasteful, repulsive; and we turn away with indifference and disgust from everything that disturbs our lethargic animal existence, or takes off our attention from our petty local interests and pursuits. Man, left long to himself, is no better than a mere clod; or his activity, for want of some other vent, preys upon himself, or is directed to splenetic, peevish dislikes, or vexatious, harassing persecution of others. I once drew a picture of country-life; it was a portrait of a particular place, a caricature if you will, but with certain allowances, I fear it was too like in the individual instance, and that it would hold too generally true. *See* ROUND TABLE, vol. ii., p. 116.

If these then are the faults and vices of the inhabitants of town or of the country, where should a man go to live, so as to escape from them? I answer, that in the country we have the society of the groves, the fields, the brooks, and in London a man may keep to himself, or choose his company as he pleases.

It appears to me that there is an amiable mixture of these two opposite characters in a person who chances to have passed his youth in London, and who has retired into the country for the rest of his life. We may find in such a one a social polish, a pastoral simplicity. He rusticates agreeably, and vegetates with a degree of sentiment. He comes to the next post-town to see for letters, watches the coaches as they pass, and eyes the passengers with a look of familiar curiosity, thinking that he too was a gay fellow in his time. He turns his horse's head down the narrow lane that leads homewards, puts on an old coat to save his wardrobe, and fills his glass nearer to the brim. As he lifts the purple juice to his lips and to his eye, and in the dim solitude that hems him round, thinks of the glowing line—

> "This bottle 's the sun of our table"—

another sun rises upon his imagination; the sun of his youth, the blaze of vanity, the glitter of the metropolis, "glares round his soul, and mocks his closing eye-lids." The distant roar of coaches is in his ears—the pit stare upon him with a thousand eyes—Mrs. Siddons, Bannister, King, are before him—he starts, as from a dream, and swears he will to London; but the expense, the length of way deters him, and he rises the next morning to trace the footsteps of the hare that has brushed the dew-drops from the lawn, or to attend a meeting of Magistrates! Mr. Justice Shallow answered in some sort to this description of a retired Cockney and indigenous country-gentleman. He "knew the Inns of Court, where they would talk of mad Shallow yet, and where the bona robas were, and had them at commandment: aye, and had heard the chimes at midnight!"

It is a strange state of society (such as that in London) where a man does not know his next-door neighbor, and where the feelings (one would think) must recoil upon themselves, and either fester or become obtuse. Mr. Wordsworth, in the preface to his poem of the "Excursion," represents men in cities as so many wild beasts or evil spirits, shut up in cells of ignorance, without natural affections, and barricadoed down in sensuality and selfishness. The nerve of humanity is bound up, according to him, the circulation of the blood stagnates. And it would be so, if men were merely cut off from intercourse with their immediate neighbors, and did not meet together generally and more at large. But man in London becomes, as Mr. Burke has it, a sort of "public creature." He lives in the eye of the world, and the world in his. If he witnesses less of the details of private life, he has better opportunities of observing its larger masses and varied movements. He sees the stream of human life pouring along the streets—its comforts and embellishments piled up in the shops—the houses are proofs of the industry, the public buildings of the art and magnificence of man; while the public amusements and places of resort are a centre and support for social feeling. A playhouse alone is a school of humanity, where all eyes are fixed on the same gay or solemn scene, where smiles or tears are spread from face to face, and where a thousand hearts beat in unison! Look at the company in a country theatre (in comparison) and see the coldness, the sullenness, the want of sympathy, and the way in which they turn round to scan and scrutinize one another. In London there is a *public;* and each man is part of it. We are gregarious, and affect the kind. We have a sort of abstract existence; and a community of ideas and knowledge (rather than local proximity) is the bond of society and good-fellowship. This is one great cause of the tone of political feeling in large and populous cities.

There is here a visible body-politic, a type and image of that huge Leviathan the State. We comprehend that vast denomination, the *People*, of which we see a tenth part daily moving before us; and by having our imaginations emancipated from petty interests and personal dependence, we learn to venerate ourselves as men, and to respect the rights of human nature. Therefore it is that the citizens and freemen of London and Westminster are patriots by prescription, philosophers and politicians by the right of their birth-place. In the country, men are no better than a herd of cattle or scattered deer. They have no idea but of individuals, none of rights or principles—and a king, as the greatest individual, is the highest idea they can form. He is "a species alone," and as superior to any single peasant as the latter is to the peasant's dog. or to a crow flying over his head. In London the king is but as one to a million (numerically speaking), is seldom seen, and then distinguished only from others by the superior graces of his person. A country 'squire or a lord of the manor is a greater man in his village or hundred!

ESSAY VI.

On living to one's-self.*

> "Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
> Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po."

I NEVER was in a better place or humor than I am at present for writing on this subject. I have a partridge getting ready for my supper, my fire is blazing on the hearth, the air is mild for the season of the year, I have had but a slight fit of indigestion to-day (the only thing that makes me abhor myself), I have three hours good before me, and therefore I will attempt it. It is as well to do it at once as to have it to do for a week to come.

If the writing on this subject is no easy task, the thing itself is a harder one. It asks a troublesome effort to ensure the admiration of others: it is a still greater one to be satisfied with one's own thoughts. As I look from the window at the wide bare heath before me, and through the misty moon-light air see the woods that wave over the top of Winterslow,

> "While Heav'n's chancel-vault is blind with sleet,"

my mind takes its flight through too long a series of years, supported only by the patience of thought and secret yearnings after truth and good, for me to be at a loss to understand the feeling I intend to write about; but I do not know that this will enable me to convey it more agreeably to the reader.

Lady G., in a letter to Miss Harriet Byron, assures her that "her brother Sir Charles lived to himself:" and Lady L. soon after (for Richardson was never tired of a good thing) repeats the same observation; to which Miss Byron frequently returns in her answers to both sisters—"For you know Sir Charles lives to himself," till at length it passes into a proverb among the fair correspondents. This is not, however, an example of what I understand by *living to one's-self*, for Sir Charles Grandison was indeed always thinking of himself; but by this phrase I mean never thinking at all about one's-self, any more than if there was no such person in existence. The character I speak of is as little of an egotist as possible: Richardson's great favorite was as much of one as possible. Some satirical critic has represented him in Elysium "bowing over the *faded* hand of Lady Grandison" (Miss Byron that was)—he ought to have been represented bowing over his own hand, for he never admired any one but himself, and was the god of his own idolatry. Neither do I call it living to one's-self to retire into a desert (like the saints and martyrs of old) to be devoured by wild beasts, nor to descend into a cave to be considered as a hermit, nor to get to the top of a pillar of rock to do fanatic penance and be seen of all men. What I mean by living to one's-self is living in the world, as in it, not of it: it is as if no one knew there was such a person, and you wish no one to know it: it is to be a silent spectator of the mighty scene of things, not an object of attention or curiosity in it; to take a thoughtful, anxious interest in what is passing in the world, but not to feel the slightest inclination to make or meddle with it. It is such a life as a pure spirit might be supposed to lead, and such an interest as it might take in the affairs of men, calm, contemplative, passive, distant, touched with pity for their sorrows, smiling at their follies without bitterness, sharing their affections, but not troubled by their passions, not seeking their notice, nor once dreamt of by them. He who lives wisely to himself and to his own heart, looks at the busy world through the loop-holes of retreat, and does not want to mingle in the fray. "He hears the tumult, and is still." He is not able to mend it, nor willing to mar it. He sees enough in the universe to interest him without putting himself forward to try what he can do to fix the eyes of the universe upon him. Vain the attempt! He reads the clouds, he looks at the stars, he watches the return of the seasons, the falling leaves of autumn, the perfumed breath of spring, starts with delight at the note of a thrush in a copse near him, sits by the fire, listens to the moanings of the wind, pores upon a book, or discourses the freezing hours away, or melts down hours to minutes in pleasing thought. All this while he is taken up with other things, forgetting himself. He relishes an author's style, without thinking of turning author. He is fond of looking at a print from an old picture in the room, without teasing himself to copy it. He does not fret himself to death with trying to be what he is not, or to do what he cannot. He hardly knows what he is capable of, and is not in the least concerned whether he shall ever make a figure in the world. He feels the truth of the lines—

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* Written at Winterslow Hut, January 18th—19th, 1821.

> "The man whose eye is on himself,
> Doth look on one, the least of nature's works;
> One who might move the wise man to that scorn
> Which wisdom holds unlawful ever"—

he looks out of himself at the wide extended prospect of nature, and takes an interest beyond his narrow pretensions in general humanity. He is free as air, and independent as the wind. Wo be to him when he first begins to think what others say of him. While a man is contented with himself and his own resources, all is well. When he undertakes to play a part on the stage, and to persuade the world to think more about him than they do about themselves, he is got into a track where he will find nothing but briars and thorns, vexations and disappointment. I can speak a little to this point. For many years of my life I did nothing but think. I had nothing else to do but to solve some knotty point, or dip in some abstruse author, or look at the sky, or wander by the pebbled sea-side—

> "To see the children sporting on the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

I cared for nothing, I wanted nothing. I took my time to consider whatever occurred to me, and was in no hurry to give a sophistical answer to a question—there was no printer's devil waiting for me. I used to write a page or two perhaps in half a year; and remember laughing heartily at the celebrated experimentalist Nicholson, who told me that in twenty years he had written as much as would make three hundred octavo volumes. If I was not a great author, I could read with ever fresh delight, "never ending, still beginning," and had no occasion to write a criticism when I had done. If I could not paint like Claude, I could admire "the witchery of the soft blue sky" as I walked out, and was satisfied with the pleasure it gave me. If I was dull, it gave me little concern: if I was lively, I indulged my spirits. I wished well to the world, and believed as favorably of it as I could. I was like a stranger in a foreign land, at which I looked with wonder, curiosity and delight, without expecting to be an object of attention in return. I had no relations to the state, no duty to perform, no ties to bind me to others; I had neither friend nor mistress, wife nor child. I lived in a world of contemplation, and not of action.

This sort of dreaming existence is the best. He who quits it to go in search of realities, generally barters repose for repeated disappointments and vain regrets. His time, thoughts, and feelings are no longer at his own disposal. From that instant he does not survey the objects of nature as they are in themselves, but looks asquint at them to see whether he cannot make them the instruments of his ambition, interest, or pleasure; for a candid, undesigning, undisguised simplicity of character, his views become jaundiced, sinister, and double: he takes no farther interest in the great changes of the world but as he has a paltry share in producing them: instead of opening his senses, his understanding, and his heart to the resplendent fabric of the universe, he holds a crooked mirror before his face, in which he may admire his own person and pretensions, and just glance his eye aside to see whether others are not admiring him too. He no more exists in the impression which "the fair variety of things" makes upon him, softened and subdued by habitual contemplation, but in the feverish sense of his own upstart self-importance. By aiming to fix, he is become the slave of opinion. He is a tool, a part of a machine that never stands still, and is sick and giddy with the ceaseless motion. He has no satisfaction but in the reflection of his own image in the public gaze, but in the repetition of his own name in the public ear. He himself is mixed up with, and spoils everything. I wonder Buonaparte was not tired of the N. N.'s stuck all over the Louvre and throughout France. Goldsmith (as we all know), when in Holland, went out into a balcony with some handsome Englishwomen, and on their being applauded by the spectators, turned round, and said peevishly—"There are places where I also am admired." He could not give the craving appetite of an author's vanity one day's respite. I have seen a celebrated talker of our own time turn pale and go out of the room when a showy-looking girl has come into it, who for a moment divided the attention of his hearers. Infinite are the mortifications of the bare attempt to emerge from obscurity; numberless the failures; and greater and more galling still the vicissitudes and tormenting accompaniments of success—

—"Whose top to climb
Is certain falling, or so slippery, that
The fear's bad as the falling."

"Would to God," exclaimed Oliver Cromwell, when he was at any time thwarted by the Parliament, "that I had remained by my woodside to tend a flock of sheep, rather than have been thrust on such a government as this!" When Buonaparte got into his carriage to proceed on his Russian expedition, carelessly twirling his glove, and singing the air—"Malbrook to the wars is going"—he did not think of the tumble he has got since, the shock of which no one could have stood but himself. We see and hear chiefly of the favorites of Fortune and the Muse, of great generals, of first-rate actors, of celebrated poets. These are at the head; we are struck with the glittering eminence on which they stand, and long to set out on the same tempting career:—not thinking how many discontented half-pay lieutenants are in vain seeking promotion all their lives, and obliged to put up with "the insolence of office, and the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes;" how many half-starved strolling players are doomed to penury and tattered robes in country-places, dreaming to the last of a London engagement; how many wretched daubers shiver and shake in the ague-fit of alternate hopes and fears, waste and pine away in the atrophy of genius, or else turn drawing-masters, picture-cleaners, or newspaper critics; how many hapless poets have sighed out their souls to the Muse in vain, without ever getting their effusions farther known than the Poet's-Corner of a country newspaper, and looked and looked with grudging, wistful eyes at the envious horizon that bounded their provincial fame! Suppose an actor, for instance, "after the heart-aches and the thousand natural pangs that flesh is heir to," *does* get at the top of his profession, he can no longer bear a rival near the throne; to be second, or only equal to another, is to be nothing: he starts at the prospect of a successor, and retains the mimic sceptre with a convulsive grasp: perhaps as he is about to seize the first place which he has long had in his eye, an unsuspected competitor steps in before him, and carries off the prize, leaving him to commence his irksome toil again: he is in a state of alarm at every appearance or rumor of the appearance of a new actor; a "mouse that takes up his lodging in a cat's ear"* has a mansion of peace to him: he dreads every hint of an objection, and least of all can forgive praise mingled with censure: to doubt is to insult, to discriminate is to degrade: he dare hardly look into a criticism unless some one has *tasted* it for him, to see that there is no offence in it: if he does not draw crowded houses every night, he can neither eat nor sleep; or if all these terrible inflictions are removed, and he can "eat his meal in peace," he then becomes surfeited with applause and dissatisfied with his profession: he wants to be something else, to be distinguished as an author, a collector, a classical scholar, a man of sense and information, and weighs every word he utters, and half retracts it before he utters it, lest if he were to make the smallest slip of the tongue, it should get buzzed abroad that *Mr. —— was only clever as an actor!* If ever there was a man who did not derive more pain than pleasure from his vanity, that man, says Rousseau was no other than a fool. A country-gentleman near Taunton spent his whole life in making some hundreds of wretched copies of second-rate pictures, which were bought up at his death by a neighboring Baronet, to whom

"Some demon whisper'd, L———, have a taste!"

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* Webster's Duchess of Malfy.

A little Wilson in an obscure corner escaped the man of *virtù*, and was carried off by a Bristol picture-dealer for three guineas, while the muddled copies of the owner of the mansion (with the frames) fetched thirty, forty, sixty, a hundred ducats a-piece. A friend of mine found a very fine Canaletti in a state of strange disfigurement, with the upper part of the sky smeared over and fantastically variegated with English clouds; and on inquiring of the person to whom it belonged whether something had not been done to it, received for answer "that a gentleman, a great artist in the neighborhood, had retouched some parts of it." What infatuation! Yet this candidate for the honors of the pencil might probably have made a jovial fox-hunter or respectable justice of the peace, if he could only have stuck to what nature and fortune intended him for. Miss —— can by no means be persuaded to quit the boards of the theatre at ——, a little country town in the West of England. Her salary has been abridged, her person ridiculed, her acting laughed at; nothing will serve—she is determined to be an actress, and scorns to return to her former business as a milliner. Shall I go on? An actor in the same company was visited by the apothecary of the place in an ague-fit, who, on asking his landlady as to his way of life, was told that the poor gentleman was very quiet and gave little trouble, that he generally had a plate of mashed potatoes for his dinner, and lay in bed most of his time, repeating his part. A young couple, every way amiable and deserving, were to have been married, and a benefit-play was bespoke by the officers of the regiment quartered there, to defray the expense of a license and of the wedding-ring, but the profits of the night did not amount to the necessary sum, and they have, I fear, "virgined it e'er since!" Oh for the pencil of Hogarth or Wilkie to give a view of the comic strength of the company at ——, drawn up in battle-array in the Clandestine Marriage, with a *coup-d'œil* of the pit, boxes, and gallery, to cure for ever the love of the *ideal*, and the desire to shine and make holiday in the eyes of others, instead of retiring within ourselves and keeping our wishes and our thoughts at home!

Even in the common affairs of life, in love, friendship, and marriage, how little security have we when we trust our happiness in the hands of others! Most of the friends I have seen have turned out the bitterest enemies, or cold, uncomfortable acquaintance. Old companions are like meats served up too often, that lose their relish and their wholesomeness. He who looks at beauty to admire, to adore it, who reads of its wondrous power in novels, in poems, or in plays, is not unwise: but let no man fall in love, for from that moment he is "the baby of a girl." I like very well to repeat such lines as these in the play of Mirandola—

> —"With what a waving air she goes
> Along the corridor. How like a fawn!
> Yet statelier. Hark! No sound, however soft,
> Nor gentlest echo telleth when she treads,
> But every motion of her shape doth seem
> Hallowed by silence"—

but however beautiful the description, defend me from meeting with the original!

> "The fly that sips treacle
> Is lost in the sweets;
> So he that tastes woman
> Ruin meets."

The song is Gay's, not mine, and a bitter-sweet it is.—How few out of the infinite number of those that marry and are given in marriage, wed with those they would prefer to all the world; nay, how far the greater proportion are joined together by mere motives of convenience, accident, recommendation of friends, or indeed not unfrequently by the very fear of the event, by repugnance and a sort of fatal fascination: yet the tie is for life, not to be shaken off but with disgrace or death: a man no longer lives to himself, but is a body (as well as mind) chained to another, in spite of himself—

> "Like life and death in disproportion met."

So Milton (perhaps from his own experience) makes Adam exclaim, in the vehemence of his despair,

> "For either
> He shall never find out fit mate, but such

As some misfortune brings him or mistake;
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd
By a far worse; or if she love, withheld
By parents; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet, already link'd and wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate and shame;
Which infinite calamity shall cause
To human life, and household peace confound."

If love at first sight were mutual, or to be conciliated by kind offices; if the fondest affection were not so often repaid and chilled by indifference and scorn; if so many lovers both before and since the madman in Don Quixotte had not "worshipped a statue, hunted the wind, cried aloud to the desert;" if friendship were lasting; if merit were renown, and renown were health, riches, and long life; or if the homage of the world were paid to conscious worth and the true aspirations after excellence, instead of its gaudy signs and outward trappings; then indeed I might be of opinion that it is better to live to others than one's-self; but as the case stands, I incline to the negative side of the question.*-

"I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee—
Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles—nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such; I stood
Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed my mind which thus itself subdued.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me—
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be

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* Shenstone and Gray were two men, one of whom pretended to live to himself, and the other really did so. Gray shrank from the public gaze (he did not even like his portrait to be prefixed to his works) into his own thoughts and indolent musings; Shenstone affected privacy, that he might be sought out by the world; the one courted retirement in order to enjoy leisure and repose, as the other coquetted with it, merely to be interrupted with the importunity of visitors and the flatteries of absent friends.

Words which are things—hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful nor weave
Snares for the failing: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
That two, or one, are almost what they seem—
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream."

Sweet verse embalms the spirit of sour misanthropy: but wo betide the ignoble prose-writer who should thus dare to compare notes with the world, or tax it roundly with imposture.

If I had sufficient provocation to rail at the public, as Ben Jonson did at the audience in the Prologues to his plays, I think I should do it in good set terms, nearly as follows. There is not a more mean, stupid, dastardly, pitiful, selfish, spiteful, envious, ungrateful animal than the Public. It is the greatest of cowards, for it is afraid of itself. From its unwieldy, over-grown dimensions, it dreads the least opposition to it, and shakes like isinglass at the touch of a finger. It starts at its own shadow, like the man in the Hartz mountains, and trembles at the mention of its own name. It has a lion's mouth, the heart of a hare, with ears erect and sleepless eyes. It stands "listening its fears." It is so in awe of its own opinion, that it never dares to form any, but catches up the first idle rumor, lest it should be behindhand in its judgment, and echoes it till it is deafened with the sound of its own voice. The idea of what the public will think, prevents the public from ever thinking at all, and acts as a spell on the exercise of private judgment, so that in short the public ear is at the mercy of the first impudent pretender who chooses to fill it with noisy assertions, or false surmises, or secret whispers. What is said by one is heard by all; the supposition that a thing is known to all the world makes all the world believe it, and the hollow repetition of a vague report drowns the "still, small voice" of reason. We may believe or know that what is said is not true: but we know or fancy that others believe it—we dare not contradict or are too indolent to dispute with them, and therefore give up our internal, and, as we think, our solitary conviction to a sound without substance, without proof, and often without meaning. Nay more, we may believe and know not only that a thing is false, but that others believe and know it to be so, that they are quite as much in the secret of the imposture as we are, that they see the puppets at work, the nature of the machinery, and yet if any one has the art or power to get the management of it, he shall keep possession of the public ear by virtue of a cant-phrase or nick-name; and, by dint of effrontery and perseverance, make all the world believe and repeat what all the world know to be false. The ear is quicker than the judgment. We know that certain things are said: by that circumstance alone we know that they produce a certain effect on the imagination of others, and we conform to their prejudices by mechanical sympathy, and for want of sufficient spirit to differ with them. So far then is public opinion from resting on a broad and solid basis, as the aggregate of thought and feeling in a community, that it is slight and shallow and variable to the last degree—the bubble of the moment—so that we may safely say the public is the dupe of public opinion, not its parent. The public is pusillanimous and cowardly, because it is weak. It knows itself to be a great dunce, and that it has no opinions but upon suggestion. Yet it is unwilling to appear in leading-strings, and would have it thought that its decisions are as wise as they are weighty. It is hasty in taking up its favorites, more hasty in laying them aside, lest it should be supposed deficient in sagacity in either case. It is generally divided into two strong parties, each of which will allow neither common sense nor common honesty to the other side. It reads the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews, and believes them both—or if there is a doubt, malice turns the scale. Taylor and Hessey told me that they had sold nearly two editions of the Characters of Shakspeare's Plays in about three months, but after the Quarterly Review of them came out, they never sold another copy. The public, enlightened as they are, must have known the meaning of that attack as well as those who made it. It was not ignorance, then, but cowardice that led them to give up their own opinion. A crew of mischievous critics at Edinburgh having fixed the epithet of the *Cockney School* to one or two writers born in the metropolis, all the people in London became afraid of looking into their works, lest they too should be convicted of cockneyism. Oh brave public! This epithet proved too much for one of the writers in question, and stuck like a barbed arrow in his heart. Poor

Keats! What was sport to the town was death to him. Young, sensitive, delicate, he was like

> "A bud bit by an envious worm,
> Ere he could spread his sweet leaves to the air,
> Or dedicate his beauty to the sun"—

and unable to endure the miscreant cry and idiot laugh, withdrew to sigh his last breath in foreign climes.—The public is as envious and ungrateful as it is ignorant, stupid, and pigeon-livered—

> "A huge-sized monster of ingratitude."

It reads, it admires, it extols only because it is the fashion, not from any love of the subject or the man. It cries you up or runs you down out of mere caprice and levity. If you have pleased it, it is jealous of its own involuntary acknowledgment of merit, and seizes the first opportunity, the first shabby pretext, to pick a quarrel with you, and be quits once more. Every petty caviller is erected into a judge, every tale-bearer is implicitly believed. Every little low paltry creature that gaped and wondered only because others did so, is glad to find you (as he thinks) on a level with himself. An author is not then, after all, a being of another order. Public admiration is forced, and goes against the grain. Public obloquy is cordial and sincere: every individual feels his own importance in it. They give you up bound hand and foot into the power of your accusers. To attempt to defend yourself is a high crime and misdemeanor, a contempt of court, an extreme piece of impertinence. Or if you prove every charge unfounded, they never think of retracting their error, or making you amends. It would be a compromise of their dignity; they consider themselves as the party injured, and resent your innocence as an imputation on their judgment. The celebrated Bubb Doddington, when out of favor at court, said, "he would not *justify* before his sovereign: it was for majesty to be displeased, and for him to believe himself in the wrong!" The public are not quite so modest. People already begin to talk of the Scotch Novels as overrated. How then can common authors be supposed to keep their heads long above water? As a general rule all those who live by the public starve, and are made a bye-word and a standing jest into the bargain. Posterity is no better (not a bit more enlightened or more liberal), except that you are no longer in their power, and that the voice of common fame saves them the trouble of deciding on your claims. The public now are the posterity of Milton and Shakspeare. Our posterity will be the living public of a future generation. When a man is dead, they put money in his coffin, erect monuments to his memory, and celebrate the anniversary of his birth-day in set speeches. Would they take any notice of him if he were living? No!—I was complaining of this to a Scotchman who had been attending a dinner and a subscription to raise a monument to Burns. He replied, he would sooner subscribe twenty pounds to his monument than have given it him while living; so that if the poet were to come to life again, he would treat him just as he was treated in fact. This was an honest Scotchman. What *he* said, the rest would do.

Enough: my soul, turn from them, and let me try to regain the obscurity and quiet that I love, "far from the madding strife," in some sequestered corner of my own, or in some far-distant land! In the latter case, I might carry with me as a consolation the passage in Bolingbroke's Reflections on Exile, in which he describes in glowing colors the resources which a man may always find within himself, and of which the world cannot deprive him.

"Believe me, the providence of God has established such an order in the world, that of all which belongs to us, the least valuable parts can alone fall under the will of others. Whatever is best is safest; lies out of the reach of human power; can neither be given nor taken away. Such is this great and beautiful work of nature, the world. Such is the mind of man, which contemplates and admires the world whereof it makes the noblest part. These are inseparably ours, and as long as we remain in one we shall enjoy the other. Let us march therefore intrepidly wherever we are led by the course of human accidents. Wherever they lead us, on what coast soever we are thrown by them, we shall not find ourselves absolutely strangers. We shall feel the same revolution of seasons, and the same sun and moon* will guide the course of our year. The same azure vault, bespangled with stars, will be everywhere spread over our heads. There is no part of the world from whence we may not admire those planets which roll, like ours, in different orbits round the same central sun; from whence we may not discover an object still more stupendous, that army of fixed stars hung up in the immense space of the universe, innumerable suns whose beams enlighten and cherish the unknown worlds which roll around them; and whilst I am ravished by such contemplations as these, whilst my soul is thus raised up to heaven, imports me little what ground I tread upon."

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* "Plut. of Banishment. He compares those who cannot live out of their own country, to the simple people who fancied the moon of Athens was a finer moon than that of Corinth,

——*Labentem cælo quæ ducitis annum*

VIRG. Georg."

ESSAY VII.

On Genius and Common Sense.

We hear it maintained by people of more gravity than understanding, that genius and taste are strictly reducible to rules, and that there is a rule for everything. So far is it from being true that the finest breath of fancy is a definable thing, that the plainest common sense is only what Mr. Locke would have called a *mixed mode*, subject to a particular sort of acquired and undefinable tact. It is asked, "If you do not know the rule by which a thing is done, how can you be sure of doing it a second time?" And the answer is, "If you do not know the muscles by the help of which you walk, how is it you do not fall down at every step you take?" In art, in taste, in life, in speech, you decide from feeling, and not from reason; that is, from the impression of a number of things on the mind, which impression is true and well-founded, though you may not be able to analyze or account for it in the several particulars. In a gesture you use, in a look you see, in a tone you hear, you judge of the expression, propriety, and meaning from habit, not from reason or rules; that is to say, from innumerable instances of like gestures, looks, and tones, in innumerable other circumstances, variously modified, which are too many and too refined to be all distinctly recollected, but which do not therefore operate the less powerfully upon the mind and eye of taste. Shall we say that these impressions (the immediate stamp of nature) do not operate in a given manner till they are classified and reduced to rules, or is not the rule itself grounded upon the truth and certainty of that natural operation? How then can the distinction of the understanding as to the manner in which they operate be necessary to their producing their due and uniform effect upon the mind? If certain effects did not regularly arise out of certain causes in mind as well as matter, there could be no rule given for them: nature does not follow the rule, but suggests it. Reason is the interpreter and critic of nature and genius, not their lawgiver and judge. He must be a poor creature indeed whose practical convictions do not in almost all cases outrun his deliberate understanding, or who does not feel and know much more than he can give a reason for. Hence the distinction between eloquence and wisdom, between ingenuity and common sense. A man may be dexterous and able in explaining the grounds of his opinions, and yet may be a mere sophist, because he only sees one half of a subject. Another may feel the whole weight of a question, nothing relating to it may be lost upon him, and yet he may be able to give no account of the manner in which it affects him, or to drag his reasons from their silent lurking-places. This last will be a wise man, though neither a logician nor a rhetorician. Goldsmith was a fool to Dr. Johnson in argument; that is, in assigning the specific grounds of his opinions: Dr. Johnson was a fool to Goldsmith in the fine tact, the airy, intuitive faculty with which he skimmed the surfaces of things, and unconsciously formed his opinions. Common sense is the just result of the sum-total of such unconscious impressions in the ordinary occurrences of life, as they are treasured up in the memory, and called out by the occasion. Genius and taste depend much upon the same principle exercised on loftier ground and in more unusual combinations.

I am glad to shelter myself from the charge of affectation or singularity in this view of an often debated, but ill understood point, by quoting a passage from Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses, which is full, and, I think, conclusive to the purpose. He says,

"I observe, as a fundamental ground, common to all the Arts with which we have any concern in this Discourse, that they address themselves only to two faculties of the mind, its imagination and its sensibility.

"All theories which attempt to direct or to control the Art, upon any principles falsely called rational, which we form to ourselves upon a supposition of what ought in reason to be the end or means of Art, independent of the known first effect produced by objects on the imagination, must be false and delusive. For though it may appear bold to say it, the imagination is here the residence of truth. If the imagination be affected, the conclusion is fairly drawn; if it be not affected, the reasoning is erroneous, because the end is not attained; the effect itself being the test, and the only test, of the truth and efficacy of the means.

"There is in the commerce of life, as in Art, a sagacity which is far from being contradictory to right reason, and is superior to any occasional exercise of that faculty; which supersedes it; and does not wait for the slow progress of deduction, but goes at once, by what appears a kind of intuition, to the conclusion. A man endowed with this faculty feels and acknowledges the truth, though it is not always in his power, perhaps, to give a reason for it; because he cannot recollect and bring before him all the materials that gave birth to his opinion; for very many and very intricate considerations may unite to form the principle, even of small and minute parts, involved in, or dependent on, a great system of things:—though these in process of time are forgotten, the right impression still remains fixed in his mind.

"This impression is the result of the accumulated experience of our whole life, and has been collected we do not always know how, or when. But this mass of collective observation, however acquired, ought to prevail over that reason, which, however powerfully exerted on any particular occasion, will probably comprehend but a partial view of the subject; and our conduct in life, as in the arts, is or ought to be generally governed by this habitual reason: it is our happiness that we are enabled to draw on such funds. If we were obliged to enter into a theoretical deliberation on every occasion before we act, life would be at a stand, and Art would be impracticable.

"It appears to me, therefore" (continues Sir Joshua), "that our first thoughts, that is, the effect which anything produces on our minds, on its first appearance, is never to be forgotten; and it demands for that reason, because it is the first, to be laid up with care. If this be not done, the artist may happen to impose on himself by partial reasoning; by a cold consideration of those animated thoughts which proceed, not perhaps from caprice or rashness (as he may afterwards conceit), but from the fulness of his mind, enriched with the copious stores of all the various inventions which he had ever seen, or had ever passed in his mind.

These ideas are infused into his design, without any conscious effort; but if he be not on his guard, he may reconsider and correct them, till the whole matter is reduced to a common-place invention.

"This is sometimes the effect of what I mean to caution you against: that is to say, an unfounded distrust of the imagination and feeling, in favor of narrow, partial, confined, argumentative theories, and of principles that seem to apply to the design in hand; without considering those general impressions on the fancy in which real principles of *sound reason*, and of much more weight and importance, are involved, and, as it were, lie hid under the appearance of a sort of vulgar sentiment. Reason, without doubt, must ultimately determine everything; at this minute it is required to inform us when that very reason is to give way to feeling."—Discourse XIII., vol. ii., p. 113–17.

Mr. Burke, by whom the foregoing train of thinking was probably suggested, has insisted on the same thing, and made rather a perverse use of it in several parts of his Reflections on the French Revolution; and Windham in one of his Speeches has clenched it into an aphorism—"There is nothing so true as habit." Once more I would say, common sense is tacit reason. Conscience is the same tacit sense of right and wrong, or the impression of our moral experience and moral apprehensions on the mind, which, because it works unseen, yet certainly, we suppose to be an instinct, implanted in the mind; as we sometimes attribute the violent operations of our passions, of which we can neither trace the source nor assign the reason, to the instigation of the Devil!

I shall here try to go more at large into this subject, and to give such instances and illustrations of it as occur to me.

One of the persons who had rendered themselves obnoxious to Government, and been included in a charge for high treason in the year 1794, had retired soon after into Wales to write an epic poem and enjoy the luxuries of a rural life. In his peregrinations through that beautiful scenery, he had arrived one fine morning at the inn at Llangollen, in the romantic valley of that name. He had ordered his breakfast, and was sitting at the window in all the dalliance of expectation, when a face passed of which he took no notice at the instant—but when his breakfast was brought in presently after, he found his appetite for it gone, the day had lost its freshness in his eye, he was uneasy and spiritless; and without any cause that he could discover, a total change had taken place in his feelings. While he was trying to account for this odd circumstance, the same face passed again—it was the face of Taylor the spy; and he was no longer at a loss to explain the difficulty. He had before caught only a transient glimpse, a passing side-view of the face; but though this was not sufficient to awaken a distinct idea in his memory, his feelings, quicker and surer, had taken the alarm; a string had been touched that gave a jar to his whole frame, and would not let him rest, though he could not at all tell what was the matter with him. To the flitting, shadowy, half-distinguished profile that had glided by his window was linked unconsciously and mysteriously, but inseparably, the impression of the trains that had been laid for him by this person;—in this brief moment, in this dim, illegible short-hand of the mind, he had just escaped the speeches of the Attorney and Solicitor-General over again; the gaunt figure of Mr. Pitt glared by him; the walls of a prison enclosed him; and he felt the hands of the executioner near him, without knowing it till the tremor and disorder of his nerves gave information to his reasoning faculties that all was not well within. That is, the same state of mind was recalled by one circumstance in the series of association that had been produced by the whole set of circumstances at the time, though the manner in which this was done was not immediately perceptible. In other words, the feeling of pleasure or pain, of good or evil, is revived, and acts instantaneously upon the mind, before we have time to recollect the precise objects which have originally given birth to it.* The incident here mentioned was merely, then, one case of what the learned understand by the *association of ideas:* but all that is meant by feeling or common sense is nothing but the different cases of the association of ideas, more or less true to the impression of the original circumstances, as reason begins with the more formal development of those circumstances, or pretends to account for the different cases of the association of ideas. But it does not follow that the dumb and silent pleading of the former (though sometimes, nay, often mistaken) is less true than that of its babbling interpreter, or that we are never to trust its dictates without consulting the express authority of reason. Both are imperfect, both are useful in their way, and therefore both are best together, to correct or to confirm one another. It does not appear that in the singular instance above mentioned, the sudden impression on the mind was superstition or fancy, though it might have been thought so, had it not been proved by the event to have a real physical and moral cause. Had not the same face returned again, the doubt would never have been properly cleared up, but would have remained a puzzle ever after, or perhaps have been soon forgotten.—By the law of association, as laid down by physiologists, any impression in a series can recall any other impression in that series without going through the whole in order: so that the mind drops the intermediate links, and passes on rapidly and by stealth to the more striking effects of pleasure or pain which have naturally taken the strongest hold of it. By doing this habitually and skilfully with respect to the various impressions and circumstances with which our experience makes us acquainted, it forms a series of unpremeditated conclusions on almost all subjects that can be brought before it, as just as they are of ready application to human life; and common sense is the name of this body of unassuming but practical wisdom. Common sense, however, is an impartial, instinctive result of truth and nature, and will therefore bear the test and abide the scrutiny of the most severe and patient reasoning. It is indeed

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* Sentiment has the same source as that here pointed out. Thus the *Ranz des Vaches*, which has such an effect on the minds of the Swiss peasantry, when its well known sound is heard, does not merely recall to them the idea of their country, but has associated with it a thousand nameless ideas, numberless touches of private affection, of early hope, romantic adventure, and national pride, all which rush in (with mingled currents) to swell the tide of fond remembrance, and make them languish or die for home. What a fine instrument the human heart is! Who shall touch it?

Who shall fathom it? Who shall "sound it from its lowest note to the top of its compass?" Who shall put his hand among the strings, and explain their wayward music? The heart alone, when touched by sympathy, trembles and responds to their hidden meaning!

incomplete without it. By ingrafting reason on feeling, we "make assurance doubly sure."

> "'Tis the last key-stone that makes up the arch—
> Then stands it a triumphal mark! Then men
> Observe the strength, the height, the why and when
> It was erected: and still walking under,
> Meet some new matter to look up, and wonder."

But reason, not employed to interpret nature, and to improve and perfect common sense and experience, is, for the most part, a building without a foundation.—The criticism exercised by reason then on common sense may be as severe as it pleases, but it must be as patient as it is severe. Hasty, dogmatical, self-satisfied reason is worse than idle fancy, or bigoted prejudice. It is systematic, ostentatious in error, closes up the avenues of knowledge, and "shuts the gates of wisdom on mankind." It is not enough to show that there is no reason for a thing, that we do not see the reason of it: if the common feeling, if the involuntary prejudice sets in strong in favor of it, if, in spite of all we can do, there is a lurking suspicion on the side of our first impressions, we must try again, and believe that truth is mightier than we. So, in offering a definition of any subject, if we feel a misgiving that there is any fact or circumstance omitted, but of which we have only a vague apprehension, like a name we cannot recollect, we must ask for more time, and not cut the matter short by an arrogant assumption of the point in dispute. Common sense thus acts as a check-weight on sophistry, and suspends our rash and superficial judgments. On the other hand, if not only no reason can be given for a thing, but every reason is clear against it, and we can account from ignorance, from authority, from interest, from different causes, for the prevalence of an opinion or sentiment, then we have a right to conclude that we have mistaken a prejudice for an instinct, or have confounded a false and partial impression with the fair and unavoidable inference from general observation. Mr. Burke said that we ought not to reject every prejudice, but should separate the husk of prejudice from the truth it encloses, and so try to get at the kernel within; and thus far he was right. But he was wrong in insisting that we are to cherish our prejudices, "because they are prejudices:" for if they are all well founded, there is no occasion to inquire into their origin or use; and he who sets out to philosophize upon them, or make the separation Mr. Burke talks of in this spirit and with this previous determination, will be very likely to mistake a maggot or a rotten canker for the precious kernel of truth, as was indeed the case with our political sophist.

There is nothing more distinct than common sense and vulgar opinion. Common sense is only a judge of things that fall under common observation, or immediately come home to the business and bosoms of men. This is of the very essence of its principle, the basis of its pretensions. It rests upon the simple process of feeling, it anchors in experience. It is not, nor it cannot be, the test of abstract, speculative opinions. But half the opinions and prejudices of mankind, those which they hold in the most unqualified approbation and which have been instilled into them under the strongest sanctions, are of this latter kind, that is, opinions, not which they have ever thought, known, or felt one tittle about, but which they have taken up on trust from others, which have been palmed on their understandings by fraud or force, and which they continue to hold at the peril of life, limb, property, and character, with as little warrant from common sense in the first instance as appeal to reason in the last. The *ultima ratio regum* proceeds upon a very different plea. Common sense is neither priestcraft nor state-policy. Yet "there's the rub that makes absurdity of so long life;" and, at the same time, gives the sceptical philosophers the advantage over us. Till nature has fair play allowed it, and it is not adulterated by political and polemical quacks (as it so often has been), it is impossible to appeal to it as a defence against the errors and extravagances of mere reason. If we talk of common sense, we are twitted with vulgar prejudice, and asked how we distinguish the one from the other: but common and received opinion is indeed "a compost heap" of crude notions, got together by the pride and passions of individuals, and reason is itself the thrall or manumitted slave of the same lordly and besotted masters, dragging its servile chain, or committing all sorts of Saturnalian licenses, the moment it feels itself freed from it.—If ten millions of Englishmen are furious in thinking themselves right in making war upon thirty millions of Frenchmen, and if the last are equally bent upon thinking the others always in the wrong, though it is a common and national prejudice, both opinions cannot be the dictate of good sense: but it may be the infatuated policy of one or both governments to keep their subjects always at variance. If a few centuries ago all Europe believed in the infallibility of the Pope, this was not an opinion derived from the proper exercise or erroneous direction of the common sense of the people: common sense had nothing to do with it—they believed whatever their priests told them. England at present is divided into Whigs and Tories, Churchmen and Dissenters: both parties have numbers on their side; but common sense and party-spirit are two different things. Sects and heresies are upheld partly by sympathy, and partly by the love of contradiction: if there was nobody of a different way of thinking, they would fall to pieces of themselves. If a whole court say the same thing, this is no proof that they think it, but that the individual at the head of the court has said it: if a mob agree for a while in shouting the same watch-word, this is not to me an example of the *sensus communis;* they only repeat what they have heard repeated by others. If indeed a large proportion of the people are in want of food, of clothing, of shelter, if they are sick, miserable, scorned, oppressed, and if each feeling it in himself, they all say so with one voice and one heart, and lift up their hands to second their appeal, this I should say was but the dictate of common sense, the cry of nature. But to waive this part of the argument, which it is needless to push farther, I believe that the best way to instruct mankind is not by pointing out to them their mutual errors, but by teaching them to think rightly on different matters, where they will listen with patience in order to be amused, and where they do not consider a definition or a syllogism as the greatest injury you can offer them.

There is no rule for expression. It is got at solely by *feeling,* that is, on the principle of the association of ideas, and by transferring what has been found to hold good in one case (with the necessary modifications) to others. A certain look has been remarked strongly indicative of a certain passion or trait of character, and we attach the same meaning to it or are affected in the same pleasurable or painful manner by it, where it exists in a less degree, though we can define neither the look itself nor the modification of it. Having got the general clue, the exact result may be left to the imagination to vary, to extenuate or aggravate it according to circumstances. In the admirable profile of Oliver Cromwell after ———, the drooping eye-lids, as if drawing a veil over the fixed, penetrating glance, the nostrils somewhat distended, and lips compressed so as hardly to let the breath escape him, denote the character of the man for high-reaching policy and deep designs as plainly as they can be written. How is it that we decipher this expression in the face? First, by feeling it: and how is it that we feel it? Not by pre-established rules, but by the instinct of analogy, by the principle of association, which is subtle and sure in proportion as it is variable and indefinite. A circumstance, apparently of no value, shall alter the whole interpretation to be put upon an expression or action; and it shall alter it thus powerfully because in proportion to its very insignificance it shows a strong general principle at work that extends in its ramifications to the smallest things. This in fact will make all the difference between minuteness and subtlety or refinement; for a small or trivial effect may in given circumstances imply the operation of a great power. Stillness may be the result of a blow too powerful to be resisted; silence may be imposed by feelings too agonizing for utterance. The minute, the trifling and insipid, is that which is little in itself, in its causes and its consequences: the subtle and refined is that which is slight and evanescent at first sight, but which mounts up to a mighty sum in the end, which is an essential part of an important whole, which has consequences greater than itself, and where more is meant than meets the eye or ear. We complain sometimes of littleness in a Dutch picture, where there are a vast number of distinct parts and objects, each small in itself, and leading to nothing else. A sky of Claude's cannot fall under this censure, where one imperceptible gradation is as it were the scale to another, where the broad arch of heaven is piled up of endlessly intermediate gold and azure tints, and where an infinite number of minute, scarce noticed particulars blend and melt into universal harmony. The subtlety in Shakspeare, of which there is an immense deal everywhere scattered up and down, is always the instrument of passion, the vehicle of character. The action of a man pulling his hat over his forehead is indifferent enough in itself, and, generally speaking, may mean anything or nothing: but in the circumstances in which Macduff is placed, it is neither insignificant nor equivocal.

> "What! man, ne'er pull your hat upon your brows," &c.

It admits but of one interpretation or inference, that which follows it:—

> "Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak,
> Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break."

The passage in the same play, in which Duncan and his attendants are introduced commenting on the beauty and situation of Macbeth's castle, though familiar in itself, has been often praised for the striking contrast it presents to the scenes which follow. The same look in different circumstances may convey a totally different expression. Thus the eye turned round to look at you without turning the head indicates generally slyness or suspicion; but if this is combined with large expanded eye-lids or fixed eyebrows, as we see it in Titian's pictures, it will denote calm contemplation or piercing sagacity, without anything of meanness or fear of being observed. In other cases, it may imply merely indolent enticing voluptuousness, as in Lely's portraits of women. The languor and weakness of the eye-lids gives the amorous turn to the expression. How should there be a rule for all this beforehand, seeing it depends on circumstances ever varying, and scarce discernible but by their effect on the mind? Rules are applicable to abstractions, but expression is concrete and individual. We know the meaning of certain looks, and we feel how they modify one another in conjunction. But we cannot have a separate rule to judge of all their combinations in different degrees and circumstances, without foreseeing all those combinations, which is impossible: or if we did foresee them, we should only be where we are; that is, we could only make the rule as we now judge without it, from imagination and the feeling of the moment. The absurdity of reducing expression to a preconcerted system was perhaps never more evidently shown than in a picture of the Judgment of Solomon by so great a man as N. Poussin, which I once heard admired for the skill and discrimination of the artist in making all the women, who are ranged on one side, in the greatest alarm at the sentence of the judge, while all the men on the opposite side see through the design of it. Nature does not go to work or cast things in a regular mould in this sort of way. I once heard a person remark of another—"He has an eye like a vicious horse." This was a fair analogy. We all, I believe, have noticed the look of a horse's eye, just before he is going to bite or kick. But will any one, therefore, describe to me exactly what that look is? It was the same acute observer that said of a self-sufficient prating music-master—"He talks on all subjects *at sight*"—which expressed the man at once by an allusion to his profession. The coincidence was indeed perfect. Nothing else could compare to the easy assurance with which this gentleman would volunteer an explanation of things of which he was most ignorant, but the *nonchalance* with which a musician sits down to a harpsichord to play a piece he has never seen before. My physiognomical friend would not have hit on this mode of illustration without knowing the profession of the subject of his criticism; but having this hint given him, it instantly suggested itself to his "sure trailing." The manner of the speaker was evident; and the association of the music-master sitting down to play at sight, lurking in his mind, was immediately called out by the strength of his impression of the character. The feeling of character, and the felicity of invention in explaining it, were nearly allied to each other. The first was so wrought up and running over, that the transition to the last was easy and unavoidable. When Mr. Kean was so much praised for the action of Richard in his last struggle with his triumphant antagonist, where he stands, after his sword is wrested from him, with his hands stretched out, "as if his will could not be disarmed, and the very phantoms of his despair had a withering power," he said that he borrowed it from seeing the last efforts of Painter in his fight with

Oliver. This assuredly did not lessen the merit of it. Thus it ever is with the man of real genius. He has the feeling of truth already shrined in his own breast, and his eye is still bent on nature to see how she expresses herself. When we thoroughly understand the subject, it is easy to translate from one language into another. Raphael, in muffling up the figure of Elymas the Sorcerer in his garments, appears to have extended the idea of blindness even to his clothes. Was this design? Probably not; but merely the feeling of analogy thoughtlessly suggesting this device, which being so suggested was retained and carried on, because it flattered or fell in with the original feeling. The tide of passion, when strong, overflows and gradually insinuates itself into all nooks and corners of the mind. Invention (of the best kind) I therefore do not think so distinct a thing from feeling, as some are apt to imagine. The springs of pure feeling will rise and fill the moulds of fancy that are fit to receive it. There are some striking coincidences of color in well-composed pictures, as in a straggling weed in the foreground streaked with blue or red to answer to a blue or red drapery, to the tone of the flesh or an opening in the sky :—not that this was intended, or done by rule (for then it would presently become affected and ridiculous), but the eye being imbued with a certain color, repeats and varies it from a natural sense of harmony, a secret craving and appetite for beauty which in the same manner soothes and gratifies the eye of taste though the cause is not understood. *Tact, finesse,* is nothing but the being completely aware of the feeling belonging to certain situations, passions, &c., and the being consequently sensible to their slightest indications or movements in others. One of the most remarkable instances of this sort of faculty is the following story, told of Lord Shaftesbury, the grandfather of the author of the Characteristics. He had been to dine with Lady Clarendon and her daughter, who was at that time privately married to the Duke of York (afterwards James II.) and as he returned home with another nobleman who had accompanied him, he suddenly turned to him, and said, "Depend upon it, the Duke has married Hyde's daughter." His companion could not comprehend what he meant; but on explaining himself, he said, "Her mother behaved to her with an attention and a marked respect that it is impossible to account for in any other way; and I am sure of it." His conjecture shortly afterwards proved to be the truth. This was carrying the prophetic spirit of common sense as far as it could go.

ESSAY VIII.

The same subject continued.

Genius or originality is, for the most part, *some strong quality in the mind, answering to and bringing out some new and striking quality in nature.*

Imagination is, more properly, the power of carrying on a given feeling into other situations, which must be done best according to the hold which the feeling itself has taken of the mind.* In new and unknown combinations, the impression must act by sympathy, and not by rule; but there can be no sympathy, where there is no passion, no original interest. The personal interest may in some cases oppress and circumscribe the imaginative faculty, as in the instance of Rousseau: but in general the strength and consistency of the imagination will be in proportion to the strength and depth of feeling; and it is rarely that a man even of lofty genius will be able to do more than carry on his own feelings and character, or some prominent and ruling passion, into fictitious and uncommon situations. Milton has by allusion embodied a great part of his political and personal history in the chief characters and incidents of Paradise Lost. He has, no doubt, wonderfully adapted and heightened them, but the elements are the same; you trace the bias and opinions of the man in the creations of the poet. Shakspeare (almost alone) seems to have been a man of genius, raised above the definition of genius. "Born universal heir to all humanity," he was "as one, in suffering all who suffered nothing;" with a perfect sympathy with all things, yet alike indifferent to all: who did not tamper with nature or warp her to his own purposes; who "knew all qualities with a learned spirit," instead of judging of them by his own predilections ; and was rather " a pipe for the Muse's finger to play what stop she pleased," than anxious to set up any character or pretensions of his own. His genius consisted in the faculty of transforming himself at will into whatever he chose : his originality was the power of seeing every object from the exact point of view in which others would see it. He was the Proteus of human intellect. Genius in ordinary is a more obstinate and less versatile thing. It is sufficiently exclusive and self-willed, quaint and peculiar. It does some one thing by virtue of doing nothing else : it excels in some one pursuit by being blind to all excellence but its own. It is just the reverse of the cameleon ; for it does not borrow, but lends its colors to all about it : or like the glow-worm, discloses a little circle of gorgeous light in the twilight of obscurity, in the night of intellect, that surrounds it. So did Rembrandt. If ever there was a man of genius, he was one, in the proper sense of the term. He lived in and revealed to others a world of his own, and might be said to have invented a new view of nature. He did not discover things *out of* nature, in fiction or fairy land, or make a voyage to the moon " to descry new lands, rivers, or mountains in her spotty globe," but saw things *in* nature that every one had missed before him, and gave others eyes to see them with. This is the test and triumph of originality, not to show us what has never been, and what we may therefore very easily never have dreamt of, but to point out to us what is before our eyes and under our feet, though we have had no suspicion of its existence, for want of sufficient strength of intuition, of determined grasp of mind to seize and retain it. Rembrandt's conquests were not over the *ideal*, but the real. He did not contrive a new story or character, but we nearly owe to him a fifth part of painting, the knowledge of *chiaro-scuro*—a distinct power and element in art and nature. He had a steadiness, a firm keeping of mind and eye, that first stood the shock of " fierce extremes" in light and shade, or reconciled the greatest obscurity and the greatest brilliancy into perfect harmony ; and he therefore was the first to hazard this appearance upon canvas, and give full effect to what he saw and delighted in. He was led to adopt this style of broad and startling contrast from its congeniality to his own feelings: his mind grappled with that which afforded the best exercise to its master-powers: he was bold in act, because he was urged on by a strong native impulse. Originality is then nothing but nature and feeling working in the mind. A man does not affect to be original: he is so, because he cannot help it, and often without knowing it. This extraordinary artist indeed might be said to have had a particular organ for color. His eye seemed to come in contact with it as a feeling, to lay hold of it as a substance, rather than to contemplate it as a visual object. The texture of his landscapes is "of the earth, earthy"—his clouds are humid, heavy, slow; his shadows are "darkness that may be felt," a "palpable obscure;" his lights are lumps of liquid splendor; there is something more in this than can be accounted for from design or accident: Rembrandt was not a man made up of two or three rules and directions for acquiring genius.

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* I do not here speak of the figurative or fanciful exercise of the imagination, which consists in finding out some striking object or image to illustrate another.

I am afraid I shall hardly write so satisfactory a character of Mr. Wordsworth, though he, too, like Rembrandt, has a faculty of making something out of nothing, that is, out of himself, by the medium through which he sees and with which he clothes the barrenest subject. Mr. Wordsworth is the last man to "look abroad into universality," if that alone constituted genius: he looks at home into himself, and is "content with riches fineless." He would in the other case be "poor as winter," if he had nothing but general capacity to trust to. He is the greatest, that is, the most original poet of the present day, only because he is the greatest egotist. He is "self-involved, not dark." He sits in the centre of his own being, and there "enjoys bright day." He does not waste a thought on others. Whatever does not relate exclusively and wholly to himself, is foreign to his views. He contemplates a whole-length figure of himself, he looks along the unbroken line of his personal identity. He thrusts aside all other objects, all other interests, with scorn and impatience, that he may repose on his own being, that he may dig out the treasures of thought contained in it, that he may unfold the precious stores of a mind for ever brooding over itself. His genius is the effect of his individual character. He stamps that character, that deep individual interest, on whatever he meets. The object is nothing but as it furnishes food for internal meditation, for old associations. If there had been no other being in the universe, Mr. Wordsworth's poetry would have been just what it is. If there had been neither love nor friendship, neither ambition nor pleasure nor business in the world, the author of the Lyrical Ballads need not have been greatly changed from what he is—might still have "kept the noiseless tenor of his way," retired in the sanctuary of his own heart, hallowing the Sabbath of his own thoughts. With the passions, the pursuits, and imaginations of other men, he does not profess to sympathize, but "finds tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in every thing." With a mind averse from outward objects, but ever intent upon its own workings, he hangs a weight of thought and feeling upon every trifling circumstance connected with his past history. The note of the cuckoo sounds in his ear like the voice of other years; the daisy spreads its leaves in the rays of boyish delight, that stream from his thoughtful eyes; the rainbow lifts its proud arch in heaven but to mark his progress from infancy to manhood; an old thorn is buried, bowed down under the mass of associations he has wound about it; and to him, as he himself beautifully says,

> ——"The meanest flow'r that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

It is this power of habitual sentiment, or of transferring the interest of our conscious existence to whatever gently solicits attention, and is a link in the chain of association, without rousing our passions or hurting our pride, that is the striking feature in Mr. Wordsworth's mind and poetry. Others have felt and shown this power before, as Withers, Burns, &c., but none have felt it so intensely and absolutely as to lend to it the voice of inspiration, as to make it the foundation of a new style and school in poetry. His strength, as it so often happens, arises from the excess of his weakness. But he has opened a new avenue to the human heart, has explored another secret haunt and nook of nature, "sacred to verse, and sure of everlasting fame." Compared with his lines, Lord Byron's stanzas are but exaggerated common-place, and Walter Scott's poetry (not his prose) old wives' fables.* There is no one in whom I have been more disappointed than in the writer here spoken of, nor with whom I am more disposed on certain points to quarrel: but the love of truth and justice which obliges me to do this, will not suffer me to blench his merits. Do what he can, he cannot help being an original-minded man. His poetry is not servile. While the cuckoo returns in the spring, while the daisy looks bright in the sun, while the rainbow lifts its head above the storm—

> "Yet I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
> And all that thou hast done for me!"

Sir Joshua Reynolds, in endeavoring to show that there is no such thing as proper originality, a spirit emanating from the mind of the artist and shining through his works, has traced Raphael through a number of figures which he has borrowed from Masaccio and others. This is a bad calculation. If Raphael had only borrowed those figures from others, would he, even in Sir Joshua's sense, have been entitled to the praise of originality? Plagiarism, I presume, in so far as it is plagiarism, is not originality. Salvator is considered by many as a great genius. He was what they call an irregular genius. My notion of genius is not exactly the same as theirs. It has also been made a question whether there is not more genius in Rembrandt's *Three Trees* than in all Claude Lorraine's landscapes? I do not know how that may be: but it was enough for Claude to have been a perfect landscape-painter.

Capacity is not the same thing as genius. Capacity may be described to relate to the quantity of knowledge, however acquired; genius to its quality and the mode of acquiring it. Capacity is a power over given ideas or combinations of ideas; genius is the power over those which are not given, and for which no obvious or precise rule can be laid down. Or capacity is power of any sort: genius is power of a different sort from what has yet been shown. A retentive memory, a clear understanding is capacity, but it is not genius. The admirable Crichton was a person of prodigious capacity; but there is no proof (that I know of) that he had an atom of genius. His verses that remain are dull and sterile. He could learn all that was known of any subject: he could do anything if others could show him the way to do it. This was very wonderful: but that is all you can say of it. It requires a good capacity to play well at chess: but, after all, it is a game of skill, and not of genius. Know what you will of it, the understanding still moves in certain tracks in which others have trod before it, quicker or slower, with more or less comprehension and presence of mind. The greatest skill strikes out nothing for itself, from its own peculiar resources; the nature of the game is a thing determinate and fixed: there is no royal or poetical road to check-mate your adversary. There is no place for genius but in the indefinite and unknown. The discovery of the binomial theorem was an effort of genius; but there was none shown in Jedediah Buxton's being able to multiply 9 figures by 9 in his head. If he could have multiplied 90 figures by 90 instead of nine, it would have been equally useless toil and trouble.* He is a man of capacity who possesses considerable intellectual riches: he is a man of genius who finds out a vein of new ore. Originality is the seeing nature differently from others, and yet as it is in itself. It is not singularity or affectation, but the discovery of new and valuable truth. All the world do not see the whole meaning of any object they have been looking at. Habit blinds them to some things; short-sightedness to others. Every mind is not a gauge and measure of truth. Nature has her surface and her dark reeesses. She is deep, obscure, and infinite. It is only minds on whom she makes her fullest impressions that can penetrate her shrine or unveil her *Holy of Holies*. It is only those whom she has filled with her spirit that have the boldness or the power to reveal her mysteries to others. But nature has a thousand aspects, and one man can only draw out one of them. Whoever does this, is a man of genius. One displays her force, another her refinement, one her power of harmony, another her suddenness of contrast, one her beauty of form, another her splendor of color. Each does that for which he is best fitted by his particular genius, that is to say, by some quality of mind into which the quality of the object sinks deepest, where it finds the most cordial welcome, is perceived to its utmost extent, and where again it forces its way out from the fulness with which it has taken possession of the mind of the student. The imagination gives out what it has first absorbed by congeniality of temperament, what it has attracted and moulded into itself by elective affinity, as the loadstone draws and impregnates iron. A little originality is more esteemed and sought for than the greatest acquired talent, because it throws a new light upon things, and is peculiar to the individual. The other is common; and may be had for the asking, to any amount.

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* Mr. Wordsworth himself should not say this, and yet I am not sure he would not.

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* The only good thing I ever heard come of this man's singular faculty of memory was the following. A gentleman was mentioning his having been sent up to London from the place where he lived to see Garrick act. When he went back into the country, he was asked what he thought of the player and the play. "Oh!" he said, "he did not know: he had only seen a little man strut about the stage, and repeat 7956 words." We all laughed at this, but a person in one corner of the room, holding one hand to his forehead, and seeming mightily delighted, called out, "Ay, indeed! And pray, was he found to be correct?" This was the supererogation of literal matter-of-fact curiosity. Jedediah Buxton's counting the number of words was idle enough; but here was a fellow who wanted some one to count them over again to see if he was correct.

"The force of *dulness* could no farther go!"

The value of any work is to be judged of by the quantity of originality contained in it. A very little of this will go a great way. If Goldsmith had never written anything but the two or three first chapters of the Vicar of Wakefield, or the character of a Village-Schoolmaster, they would have stamped him a man of genius. The Editors of Encyclopedias are not usually reckoned the first literary characters of the age. The works, of which they have the management, contain a great deal of knowledge, like chests or warehouses, but the goods are not their own. We should as soon think of admiring the shelves of a library; but the shelves of a library are useful and respectable. I was once applied to, in a delicate emergency, to write an article on a difficult subject for an Encyclopedia, and was advised to take time and give it a systematic and scientific form, to avail myself of all the knowledge that was to be obtained on the subject, and arrange it with clearness and method. I made answer that as to the first, I had taken time to do all that I ever pretended to do, as I had thought incessantly on different matters for twenty years of my life* ; that I had no particular knowledge of the subject in question, and no head for arrangement ; and that the utmost I could do in such a case would be, when a systematic and scientific article was prepared, to write marginal notes upon it, to insert a remark or illustration of my own (not to be found in former Encyclopedias) or to suggest a better definition than had been offered in the text. There are two sorts of writing. The first is compilation ; and consists in collecting and stating all that is already known of any question in the best possible manner, for the benefit of the uninformed reader. An author of this class is a very learned amanuensis of other people's thoughts. The second sort proceeds on an entirely different principle. Instead of bringing down the account of knowledge to the point at which it has already arrived, it professes to start from that point on the strength of the writer's individual reflections ; and supposing the reader in possession of what is already known, supplies deficiencies, fills up certain blanks, and quits the beaten road in search of new tracts of observation or sources of feeling. It is in vain to object to this last style that it is disjointed, disproportioned, and irregular. It is merely a set of additions and corrections to other men's works, or to the common stock of human knowledge, printed separately. You might as well expect a continued chain of reasoning in the notes to a book. It skips all the trite, intermediate, level common-places of the subject, and only stops at the difficult passages of the human mind, or touches on some striking point that has been overlooked in previous editions. A view of a subject, to be connected and regular, cannot be all new. A writer will always be liable to be charged either with paradox or common-place, either with dullness or affectation. But we have no right to demand from any one more than he pretends to. There is indeed a medium in all things, but to unite opposite excellences, is a task ordinarily too hard for mortality. He who succeeds in what he aims at, or who takes the lead in any one mode or path of excellence, may think himself very well off. It would not be fair to complain of the style of an Encyclopedia as dull, as wanting volatile salt; nor of the style of an Essay because it is too light and sparkling, because it is not a *caput mortuum.* So it is rather an odd objection to a work that is made up entirely of "brilliant passages"—at least it is a fault that can be found with few works, and the book might be pardoned for its singularity. The censure might indeed seem like adroit flattery, if it were not passed on an author whom any objection is sufficient to render unpopular and ridiculous. I grant it is best to unite solidity with show, general information with particular ingenuity. This is the pattern of a perfect style: but I myself do not pretend to be a perfect writer. In fine, we do not banish light French wines from our tables, or refuse to taste sparkling Champagne when we can get it, because it has not the body of Old Port. Besides, I do not know that dulness is strength, or that an observation is slight, because it is striking. Mediocrity, insipidity, want of character, is the great fault. *Mediocribus esse poetis non Dii, non homines, non concessère columnæ.* Neither is this privilege allowed to prose-writers in our time, any more than to poets formerly.

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* Sir Joshua Reynolds being asked how long it had taken him to do a certain picture, made answer, "All his life."

It is not then acuteness of organs or extent of capacity that constitutes rare genius or produces the most exquisite models of art, but an intense sympathy with some one beauty or distinguishing characteristic in nature. Irritability alone, or the interest taken in certain things, may supply the place of genius in weak and otherwise ordinary minds. As there are certain instruments fitted to perform certain kinds of labor, there are certain minds so framed as to produce certain *chef-d'œuvres* in art and literature, which is surely the best use they can be put to. If a man had all sorts of instruments in his shop and wanted one, he would rather have that one than be supplied with a double set of all the others. If he had them all twice over, he could only do what he can do as it is, whereas without that one he perhaps cannot finish any one work he has in hand. So if a man can do one thing better than anybody else, the value of this one thing is what he must stand or fall by, and his being able to do a hundred other things merely *as well* as anybody else, would not alter the sentence or add to his respectability; on the contrary, his being able to do so many other things well would probably interfere with and encumber him in the execution of the only thing that others cannot do as well as he, and so far be a draw-back and a disadvantage. More people in fact fail from a multiplicity of talents and pretensions than from an absolute poverty of resources. I have given instances of this elsewhere. Perhaps Shakspeare's tragedies would in some respects have been better, if he had never written comedies at all; and in that case, his comedies might well have been spared, though they might have cost us some regret. Racine, it is said, might have rivalled Molière in comedy; but he gave up the cultivation of his comic talents to devote himself wholly to the tragic Muse. If, as the French tell us, he in consequence attained to the perfection of tragic composition, this was better than writing comedies as well as Molière and tragedies as well as Crebillon. Yet I count those persons fools who think it a pity Hogarth did not succeed better in serious subjects. The division of labor is an excellent principle in taste as well as in mechanics. Without this, I find from Adam Smith, we could not have a pin made to the degree of perfection it is. We do not, on any rational scheme of criticism, inquire into the variety of a man's excellences, or the number of his works, or his facility of production. Venice Preserved is sufficient for Otway's fame. I hate all those nonsensical stories about Lopez de Vega and his writing a play in a morning before breakfast. He had time enough to do it after. If a man leaves behind him any work which is a model in its kind, we have no right to ask whether he could do anything else, or how he did it, or how long he was about it. All that talent which is not necessary to the actual quantity of excellence existing in the world, loses its object, is so much waste talent or *talent to let*. I heard a sensible man say he should like to do some one thing better than all the rest of the world, and in everything else to be like all the rest of the world. Why should a man do more than his part? The rest is vanity and vexation of spirit. We look with jealous and grudging eye at all those qualifications which are not essential; first, because they are superfluous, and next, because we suspect they will be prejudicial. Why does Mr. Kean play all those harlequin tricks of singing, dancing, fencing, &c.? They say, "It is for his benefit." It is not for his reputation. Garrick indeed shone equally in comedy and tragedy. But he was first, not second-rate in both. There is not a greater impertinence than to ask, if a man is clever out of his profession. I have heard of people trying to cross-examine Mrs. Siddons. I would as soon try to entrap one of the Elgin Marbles into an argument. Good nature and common sense are required from all people: but one proud distinction is enough for any one individual to possess or to aspire to!

ESSAY IX.

Hot and Cold.

> —"*Hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions fierce,*
> *Strive here for mastery.*"—Milton.

"The Protestants are much cleaner than the Catholics," said a shopkeeper of Vevay to me. "They are so," I replied, "but why should they?" A prejudice appeared to him a matter-of-fact, and he did not think it necessary to assign reasons for a matter-of-fact. That is not my way. He had not bottomed his proposition on proofs, nor rightly defined it.

Nearly the same remark, as to the extreme cleanliness of the poeple in this part of the country, had occurred to me as soon as I got to Brigg, where however the inhabitants are Catholics. So the original statement requires some qualification as to the mode of enunciation. I had no sooner arrived in this village, which is situated just under the Simplon, and where you are surrounded with *glaciers* and *goîtres*, than the genius of the place struck me on looking out at the pump under my window the next morning, where the "neat-handed Phyllises" were washing their greens in the water, that not a caterpillar could crawl on them, and scouring their pails and tubs that not a stain should be left in them. The raw, clammy feeling of the air was in unison with the scene. I had not seen such a thing in Italy. They have there no delight in splashing and dabbling in fresh streams and fountains—they have a dread of ablutions and abstersions, almost amounting to *hydrophobia*. Heat has an antipathy in nature to cold. The sanguine Italian is chilled and shudders at the touch of cold water, while the Helvetian boor, whose humors creep through his veins like the dank mists along the sides of his frozen mountains, is "native and endued unto that element." Here everything is purified and filtered: there it is baked and burnt up, and sticks together in a most amicable union of filth and laziness. There is a little mystery and a little contradiction in the case—let us try if we cannot get rid of both by means of caution and daring together. It is not that the difference of latitude between one side of the Alps and the other can signify much; but the phlegmatic blood of their German ancestors is poured down the valleys of the Swiss like water, and *iced* in its progress;—whereas that of the Italians, besides its vigorous origin, is enriched and ripened by basking in more genial plains. A single Milanese market-girl (to go no farther south) appeared to me to have more blood in her body, more fire in her eye (as if the sun had made a burning *lens* of it), more spirit and probably more mischief about her than all the nice, *tidy*, good-looking, hard-working girls I have seen in Switzerland. To turn this physiognomical observation to a metaphysical account, I should say then that Northern people are clean and Southern people dirty as a general rule, because where the principle of life is more cold, weak, and impoverished, there is a greater shyness and aversion to come in contact with external matter (with which it does not so easily amalgamate), a greater fastidiousness and delicacy in choosing its sensations, a greater desire to know surrounding objects and to keep them clear of each other, than where this principle being more warm and active, it may be supposed to absorb outward impressions in itself, to melt them into its own essence, to impart its own vital impulses to them, and in fine, instead of shrinking from everything, to be shocked at nothing. The Southern temperament is (so to speak) more sociable with matter, more gross, impure, indifferent, from relying on its own strength; while that opposed to it, from being less able to react on external applications, is obliged to be more cautious and particular as to the kind of excitement to which it renders itself liable. Hence the timidity, reserve, and occasional hypocrisy of Northern manners; the boldness, freedom, levity, and frequent licentiousness of Southern ones. It would be too much to say, that if there is anything of which a genuine Italian has a horror, it is of cleanliness; or that if there is anything which seems ridiculous to a thoroughly-bred Italian woman, it is modesty: but certainly the degree to which nicety is carried by some people is a *bore* to an

Italian imagination, as the excess of delicacy which is pretended or practised by some women is quite incomprehensible to the females of the South. It is wrong, however, to make the greater confidence or forwardness of manners an absolute test of morals: the love of virtue is a different thing from the fear or even hatred of vice. The squeamishness and prudery in the one case have a more plausible appearance; but it does not follow that there may not be more native goodness and even habitual refinement in the other, though accompanied with stronger nerves and a less morbid imagination. But to return to the first question.* I can readily understand how a Swiss peasant should stand a whole morning at a pump, washing cabbages, cauliflowers, salads, and getting rid half a dozen times over of the sand, dirt, and insects they contain, because I myself should not only be *gravelled* by meeting with the one at table, but should be in horrors at the other. A Frenchman or an Italian would be thrown into convulsions of laughter at this superfluous delicacy, and would think his repast enriched or none the worse for such additions. The reluctance to prey on life, or on what once had it, seems to arise from a sense of incongruity, from the repugnance between life and death—from the cold, clammy feeling which belongs to the one, and which is enhanced by the contrast to its former warm, lively state, and by the circumstance of its being taken into the mouth, and devoured as food. Hence the desire to get rid of the idea of the living animal even in ordinary cases by all the disguises of cookery, of boiled and roast, and by the artifice of changing the name of the animal into something different when it becomes food.† Hence sportsmen are not devourers of game, nd hence the aversion to kill the animals we eat.* There is a contradiction between the animate and inanimate, which is felt as matter of peculiar annoyance by the more cold and congealed temperament which cannot so well pass from one to the other; but this objection is easily swallowed by the inhabitant of gayer and more luxurious regions, who is so full of life himself that he can at once impart it to all that comes in his way, or never troubles himself about the difference. So the Neapolitan bandit takes the life of his victim with little remorse, because he has enough and to spare in himself: his pulse still beats warm and vigorous, while the blood of a more humane native of the frozen North would run cold with horror at the sight of the stiffened corse, and this makes him pause before he stops in another the gushing source, of which he has such feeble supplies in himself. The wild Arab of the Desert can hardly entertain the idea of death, neither dreading it for himself nor regretting it for others. The Italians, Spaniards, and people of the South swarm alive without being sick or sorry at the circumstance: they hunt the accustomed prey in each other's tangled locks openly in the streets and on the highways, without manifesting shame or repugnance: combs are an invention of our Northern climes. Now I can comprehend this, when I look at the dirty, dingy, greasy, sun-burnt complexion of an Italian peasant or beggar, whose body seems alive all over with a sort of tingling, oily sensation, so that from any given particle of his shining skin to the beast "whose name signifies love," the transition is but small. This populousness is not unaccountable where all teems with life, where all is glowing and in motion, and every pore thrills with an exuberance of feeling. Not so in the dearth of life and spirit, in the drossy, dry, material texture, the clear complexions and fair hair of the Saxon races, where the puncture of an insect's sting is a solution of their personal identity, and the idea of life attached to and courting an intimacy with them in spite of themselves, naturally produces all the revulsions of the most violent antipathy, and nearly drives them out of their wits. How well the smooth ivory comb and auburn hair agree—while the Greek *dandy*, on entering a room, applies his hand to brush a cloud of busy stragglers from his hair like powder, and gives himself no more concern about them than about the motes dancing in the sun-beams! The dirt of the Italians is as it were baked into them, and so ingrained as to become a part of themselves, and occasion no discontinuity of their being.

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* Women abroad (generally speaking) are more like men in the tone of their conversation and habits of thinking, so that from the same premises you cannot draw the same conclusions as in England.

† This circumstance is noticed in Ivanhoe, though a different turn is given to it by the philosopher of Rotherwood.

"Nay, I can tell you more," said Wamba in the same tone, "there is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet, while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou; but becomes Beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf too becomes Monsieur de Veau in like manner: he is Saxon when he requires tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment."—Vol. i., Chap. 1

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* Hence the peculiar horror of cannibalism from the stronger sympathy with our own sensations, and the greater violence that is done to it by the sacrilegious use of what once possessed human life and feeling.

I can forgive the dirt and sweat of a gipsy under a hedge, when I consider that the earth is his mother, the sun is his father. He hunts vermin for food: he is himself hunted like vermin for prey. His existence is not one of choice, but of necessity. The hungry Arab devours the raw shoulder of a horse. This again I can conceive. His feverish blood seethes it, and the virulence of his own breath carries off the disagreeableness of the smell. I do not see that the horse should be reckoned among unclean animals, according to any notions I have of the matter. The dividing of the hoof or the contrary, I should think, has not anything to do with the question. I can understand the distinction between beasts of prey and the herbivorous and domestic animals, but the horse is tame. The natural distinction between clean and unclean animals (which has been sometimes made into a religious one) I take to depend on two circumstances, viz. the claws and bristly hide, which generally, though not always, go together. One would not wish to be torn in pieces instead of making a comfortable meal, "to be supped upon" where we thought of supping. With respect to the wolf, the tiger, and other animals of the same species, it seems a question which of us should devour the other: this baulks our appetite by distracting our attention, and we have so little relish for being eaten ourselves, or for the fangs and teeth of these shocking animals, that it gives us a distaste for their whole bodies. The horror we conceive at preying upon them arises in part from the fear we had of being preyed upon by them. No such apprehension crosses the mind with respect to the deer, the sheep, the hare—"here all is conscience and tender heart." These gentle creatures (whom we compliment as useful) offer no resistance to the knife, and there is therefore nothing shocking or repulsive in the idea of devoting them to it. There is no confusion of ideas, but a beautiful simplicity and uniformity in our relation to each other, we as the slayers, they as the slain. A perfect understanding subsists on the subject. The hair of animals of prey is also strong and bristly, and forms an obstacle to our Epicurean designs. The calf or fawn is sleek and smooth : the bristles on a dog's or cat's back are like "the quills upon the fretful porcupine," a very impracticable repast to the imagination, that stick in the throat and turn the stomach. Who has not read and been edified by the account of the supper of Gil Blas? Besides, there is also in all probability the practical consideration urged by Voltaire's traveller, who being asked "which he preferred—black mutton or white?" replied, "Either, provided it was tender." The greater rankness in the flesh is however accompanied by a corresponding irritability of surface, a tenaciousness, a pruriency, a soreness to attack, and not that fine, round, pampered passiveness to impressions which cuts up into handsome joints and entire pieces without any fidgetty process, and with an obvious view to solid, wholesome nourishment. Swine's flesh, the abomination of the Jewish law, certainly comes under the objection here stated ; and the bear with its shaggy fur is only smuggled into the Christian larder as half-brother to the wild boar, and because from its lazy, lumpish character and appearance, it seems matter of indifference whether it eats or is eaten. The horse, with sleek round haunches, is fair game, except from custom ; and I think I could survive having swallowed part of an ass's foal without being utterly loathsome to myself.* Mites in a rotten cheese are endurable, from being so small and dry that they are scarce distinguishable from the atoms of the cheese itself, " so drossy and divisible are they :" but the Lord deliver me from their more thriving next-door neighbors ! Animals that are made use of as food should either be so small as to be imperceptible, or else we should dig into the quarry of life, hew away the masses, and not leave the form standing to reproach us with our gluttony and cruelty. I hate to see a rabbit trussed, or a hare brought to table in the form which it occupied while living : they seem to me apparitions of the burrowers in the earth or the rovers in the wood, sent to scare away appetite. One reason why toads and serpents are disgusting, is from the way in which they run against or suddenly cling to the skin ; the encountering them causes a solution of continuity, and we shudder to feel a life which is not ours in contact with us. It is this disjointed or imperfect sympathy which in the recoil produces the greatest antipathy. Sterne asks why a sword, which takes away life, may be named without offence, though other things, which contribute to perpetuate it, cannot ? Because the idea in the one case is merely painful, and there is no mixture of the agreeable to lead the imagination on to a point from which it must make a precipitate retreat. The morally indecent arises from the doubtful conflict between temptation and duty : the physically revolting is the product of alternate attraction and repulsion, of partial adhesion, or of something that is foreign to us sticking closer to our persons than we could wish. The nastiest tastes and smells are not the most pungent and painful, but a compound of sweet and bitter, of the agreeable and disagreeable ; where the sense, having been relaxed and rendered effeminate as it were by the first, is unable to contend with the last, faints and sinks under it, and has no way of relieving itself but by violently throwing off the load that oppresses it. Hence loathing and sickness. But these hardly ever arise without something contradictory or *impure* in the objects, or unless the mind, having been invited and prepared to be gratified at first, this expectation is turned to disappointment and disgust. Mere pains, mere pleasures do not have this effect, save from an excess of the first causing insensibility and then a faintness ensues, or of the last, causing what is called a surfeit. Sea-sickness has some analogy to this. It comes on with that unsettled motion of the ship, which takes away the ordinary footing or firm hold we have of things, and by relaxing our perceptions, unbraces the whole nervous system. The giddiness and swimming of the head on looking down a precipice, when we are ready with every breath of imagination to topple down into the abyss, has its source in the same uncertain and rapid whirl of the fancy through possible extremes. Thus we find that for cases of fainting, sea-sickness, &c., a glass of brandy is recommended as "the sovereign'st thing on earth," because by grappling with the coats of the stomach and bringing our sensations to a *focus*, it does away that nauseous fluctuation and suspense of feeling which is the root of the mischief. I do not know whether I make myself intelligible, for the utmost I can pretend is to suggest some very subtle and remote analogies: but if I have at all succeeded in opening up the train of argument I intend, it will at least be possible to conceive how the sanguine Italian is less nice in his intercourse with material objects, less startled at incongruities, less liable to take offence, than the more literal and conscientious German, because the more headstrong current of his own sensations fills up the gaps and "makes the odds all even." He does not care to have his cabbages and salads washed ten times over, or his beds cleared of vermin: he can lend or borrow satisfaction from all objects indifferently. The air over his head is full of life, of the hum of insects; the grass under his feet rings and is loud with the cry of the grasshopper; innumerable green lizards dart from the rocks and sport before him: what signifies it if any living creature approaches nearer his own person, where all is one vital glow? The Indian even twines the forked serpent round his hand unharmed, copper-colored like it, his veins as heated; and the Brahmin cherishes life and disregards his own person as an act of his religion—the religion of fire and of the sun! Yet how shall we reconcile to this theory the constant ablutions (five times a day) of the Eastern nations, and the squalid customs of some Northern people, the dirtiness of the Russians and of the Scotch? Superstition may perhaps account for the one, and poverty and barbarism for the other.*

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* Thomas Cooper of Manchester, the able logician and political partisan, tried the experiment some years ago, when he invited a number of gentlemen and officers quartered in the town to dine with him on an ass's foal instead of a calf's-head, on the anniversary of the 30th of January The circumstance got wind, and gave great offence. Mr. Cooper had to attend a county-meeting soon after at Boulton-le-Moors, and one of the county magistrates coming to the inn for the same purpose, and when he asked "If any one was in the room?" receiving for answer—"No one but Mr. Cooper of Manchester"—ordered out his horse and immediately rode home again. Some verses made on the occasion by Mr. Scarlett and Mr. Shepherd of Gateacre explained the story thus—

"The reason how this came to pass is
The Justice had heard that Cooper ate asses!"

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* What a plague Moses had with his Jews to make them "reform and live cleanly!" To this day (according to a learned traveller) the Jews,

Laziness has a great deal to do in the question, and this again is owing to a state of feeling sufficient to itself, and rich in enjoyment without the help of action. Clothilde (the finest and darkest of the Gensano girls) fixes herself at her door about noon (when her day's work is done): her smile reflects back the brightness of the sun, she darts upon a little girl with a child in her arms, nearly overturns both, devours it with kisses, and then resumes her position at the door, with her hands behind her back and her shoes down at heel. This slatternliness and negligence is the more remarkable in so fine a girl, and one whose ordinary costume is a gorgeous picture, but it is a part of the character; her dress would never have been so rich, if she could take more pains about it—they have no nervous or fidgetty feeling whether a thing is coming off or not: all their sensations, as it were, sit loose upon them. Their clothes are no part of themselves,—they even fling their limbs about as if they scarcely belonged to them; the heat in summer requires the utmost freedom and airiness (which becomes a habit), and they have nothing tight-bound or strait-laced about their minds or bodies. The same girl in winter (for "dull, cold winter *does* inhabit here" also) would have a *scaldaletto* (an earthen pan with coals in it) dangling at her wrists for four months together, without any sense of incumbrance or distraction, or any other feeling but of the heat it communicated to her hands. She does not mind its chilling the rest of her body or disfiguring her hands, making her fingers look like "long purples"—these children of nature "take the good the Gods provide them," and trouble themselves little about consequences or appearances. Their self-will is much stronger than their vanity—they have as little curiosity about others as concern for their good opinion. Two Italian peasants talking by the roadside will not so much as turn their heads to look at an English carriage that is passing. They have no interest except in what is personal, sensual. Hence they have as little tenaciousness on the score of property as in the acquisition of ideas. They want neither. Their good spirits are

vherever scattered, have an aversion to agriculture and almost to its pro-lucts; and a Jewish girl will refuse to accept a flower—if you offer her a piece of money, of jewellery or embroidery, she knows well enough what to make of the proffered courtesy. See *Hacquet's Travels in Carpathia, &c*

food, clothing, and books to them. They are fond of comfort too, but their notion of it differs from ours—ours consists in accumulating the means of enjoyment, theirs in being free to enjoy, in the dear *far niente.* What need have they to encumber themselves with furniture or wealth or business, when all they require (for the most part) is air, a bunch of grapes, bread, and stone-walls? The Italians, generally speaking, have nothing, do nothing, want nothing,—to the surprise of foreigners, who ask how they live? The men are too lazy to be thieves, the women to be something else. The dependence of the Swiss and English on their comforts, that is, on all "appliances and means to boot," as helps to enjoyment or hindrances to annoyance, makes them not only eager to procure different objects of accommodation and luxury, but makes them take such pains in their preservation and embellishment, and *pet* them so when acquired. "A man," says Yorick, "finds an apple, spits upon it, and calls it his." The more any one finds himself clinging to material objects for existence or gratification, the more he will take a personal interest in them, and the more will he clean, repair, polish, scrub, scour, and tug at them without end, as if it were his own soul that he was keeping clear from spot or blemish. A Swiss dairy-maid scours the very heart out of a wooden pail; a scullion washes the taste as well as the worms out of a dish of brocoli. The wenches are in like manner neat and clean in their own persons, but insipid. The most coarse and ordinary furniture in Switzerland has more pains bestowed upon it to keep it in order, than the finest works of art in Italy. There the pictures are suffered to moulder on the walls; and the Claudes in the Doria Palace at Rome are black with age and dirt. We set more store by them in England, where we have scarce any other sunshine! At the common inns on this side the Simplon, the very sheets have a character for whiteness to lose; the rods and testers of the beds are like a peeled wand. On the opposite side you are thankful when you are not shown into an apartment resembling a three-stalled stable, with horse-cloths for coverlids to hide the dirt, and beds of horse-hair or withered leaves as harborage for vermin. The more, the merrier; the dirtier, the warmer; live and let live, seem maxims inculcated by the climate. Wherever things are not kept carefully apart from foreign admixtures and contamination, the distinctions of property itself will not, I conceive, be held exceedingly sacred. This feeling is strong as the passions are weak. A people that are remarkable for cleanliness, will be so for industry, for honesty, for avarice, and *vice versâ.* The Italians cheat, steal, rob (when they think it worth their while to do so) with licensed impunity: the Swiss, who feel the value of property, and labor incessantly to acquire it, are afraid to lose it. At Brigg I first heard the cry of watchmen at night, which I had not heard for many months. I was reminded of the traveller who after wandering in remote countries saw a gallows near at hand, and knew by this circumstance that he approached the confines of civilisation. The police in Italy is both secret and severe, but it is directed chiefly to political and not to civil matters. Patriot sighs are heaved unheard in the dungeons of St. Angelo: the Neapolitan bandit breathes the free air of his native mountains!

It may by this time be conjectured why Catholics are less cleanly than Protestants, because in fact they are less scrupulous, and swallow whatever is set before them in matters of faith as well as other things. Protestants, as such, are captious and scrutinizing, try to pick holes and find fault,—have a dry, meagre, penurious imagination. Catholics are buoyed up over doubts and difficulties by a greater redundance of fancy, and make religion subservient to a sense of enjoyment. The one are for detecting and weeding out all corruptions and abuses in doctrine or worship: the others enrich theirs with the dust and cobwebs of antiquity, and think their ritual none the worse for the tarnish of age. Those of the Catholic Communion are willing to take it for granted that everything is right; the professors of the Reformed religion have a pleasure in believing that everything is wrong, in order that they may have to set it right. In morals, again, Protestants are more precise than their Catholic brethren. The creed of the latter absolves them of half their duties, of all those that are a clog on their inclinations, atones for all slips, and patches up all deficiencies. But though this may make them less censorious and sour, I am not sure that it renders them less in earnest in the part they do perform. When more is left to freedom of choice, perhaps the service that is voluntary will be purer and more effectual. That which is not so may as well be done by proxy; or if it does not come from the heart, may be suffered to exhale merely from the lips. If less is owing in this case to a dread of vice and fear of shame, more will proceed from a love of virtue, free from the least sinister construction. It is asserted that Italian women are more gross; I can believe it, and that they are at the same time more refined than others. Their religion is in the same manner more sensual: but is it not to the full as visionary and imaginative as any? I have heard Italian women say things that others would not—it does not therefore follow that they would do them: partly because the knowledge of vice that makes it familiar renders it indifferent; and because the same masculine tone of thinking that enables them to confront vice, may raise them above it into a higher sphere of sentiment. If their senses are more inflammable, their passions (and their love of virtue and of religion among the rest) may glow with proportionable ardor. Indeed the truest virtue is that which is least susceptible of contamination from its opposite. I may admire a Raphael, and yet not swoon at sight of a daub. Why should there not be the same taste in morals as in pictures or poems? Granting that vice has more votaries here, at least it has fewer mercenary ones, and this is no trifling advantage. As to manners, the Catholics must be allowed to carry it over all the world. The better sort not only say nothing to give you pain; they say nothing of others that it would give them pain to hear repeated. Scandal and tittle-tattle are long banished from good society. After all, to be wise is to be humane. What would our English *blue-stockings* say to this? The fault and the excellence of Italian society is, that the shocking or disagreeable is not supposed to have an existence in the nature of things.*

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* The dirt and comparative want of conveniences among Catholics is often attributed to the number of their Saints' days and festivals, which divert them from labor, and give them an idle and disorderly turn of mind.

ESSAY X.

On thought and action.

Those persons who are much accustomed to abstract contemplation are generally unfitted for active pursuits and *vice versâ*. I myself am sufficiently decided and dogmatical in my opinions, and yet in action I am as imbecile as a woman or a child. I cannot set about the most indifferent thing without twenty efforts, and had rather write one of these Essays than have to seal a letter. In trying to throw a hat or a book upon a table I miss it; it just reaches the edge and falls back again, and instead of doing what I mean to perform, I do what I intend to avoid. Thought depends on the habitual exercise of the speculative faculties; action on the determination of the will. The one assigns reasons for things, the other puts causes into act. Abraham Tucker relates of a friend of his, an old special pleader, that once coming out of his chambers in the Temple with him to take a walk, he hesitated at the bottom of the stairs which way to go—proposed different directions, to Charing-Cross, to St. Paul's—found some objection to them all, and at last turned back for want of a casting motive to incline the scale. Tucker gives this as an instance of professional indecision, or of that temper of mind which having been long used to weigh the reasons for things with scrupulous exactness, could not come to any conclusion at all on the spur of the occasion, or without some grave distinction to justify its choice. Louvet, in his Narrative, tells us, that when several of the Brissotin party were collected at the house of Barbaroux (I think it was) ready to effect their escape from the power of Robespierre, one of them going to the window and finding a shower of rain coming on, seriously advised their stopping till the next morning, for that the emissaries of government would not think of coming in search of them in such bad weather. Some of them deliberated on this wise proposal, and were nearly taken. Such is the effeminacy of the speculative and philosophical temperament, compared with the promptness and vigor of the practical! It is on such unequal terms that the refined and romantic speculators on possible good and evil contend with their strong-nerved, remorseless adversaries, and we see the result. Reasoners in general are undecided, wavering, and sceptical, or yield at last to the weakest motive, as most congenial to their feeble habit of soul.*

Some men are mere machines. They are put in a go-cart of business, and are harnessed to a profession—yoked to fortune's wheels. They plod on, and succeed. Their affairs conduct them, not they their affairs. All they have to do is to let things take their course, and not go out of the beaten road. A man may carry on the business of farming on the same spot and principle that his ancestors have done for many generations before him without any extraordinary share of capacity: the proof is, it is done every day in every county and parish in the kingdom. All that is necessary is that he should not pretend to be wiser than his neighbors. If he has a grain more wit or penetration than they, if his vanity gets the start of his avarice only half a neck, if he has ever thought or read anything upon the subject, it will most probably be the ruin of him. He will turn theoretical or experimental farmer, and no more need be said. Mr. Cobbett, who is a sufficiently shrewd and practical man, with an eye also to the main chance, had got some notions in his head (from Tull's Husbandry) about the method of sowing turnips, to which he would have sacrificed not only his estate at Botley, but his native county of Hampshire itself, sooner than give up an inch of his argument. "Tut! will you baulk a man in the career of his humor?" Therefore, that a man may not be ruined by his humors, he should be too dull and phlegmatic to have any: he must have "no figures nor no fantasies which busy thought draws in the brains of men." The fact is, that the ingenuity or judgment of no one man is equal to that of the world at large, which is the fruit of the experience and ability of all mankind. Even where a man is right in a particular notion, he will be apt to over-rate the importance of his discovery, to the detriment of his affairs. Action requires co-operation, but in general if you set your face against custom, people will set their faces against you. They cannot tell whether you are right or wrong, but they know that you are guilty of a pragmatical assumption of superiority over them, which they do not like. There is no doubt that if a person two hundred years ago had foreseen and attempted to put in practice the most approved and successful methods of cultivation now in use, it would have been a death-blow to his credit and fortune. So that though the experiments and improvements of private individuals from time to time gradually go to enrich the public stock of information and reform the general practice, they are mostly the ruin of the person who makes them, because he takes a part for the whole, and lays more stress upon the single point in which he has found others in the wrong, than on all the rest in which they are substantially and prescriptively in the right. The great requisite, it should appear then, for the prosperous management of ordinary business, is the want of imagination, or of any ideas but those of custom and interest on the narrowest scale :—and as the affairs of the world are necessarily carried on by the common run of its inhabitants, it seems a wise dispensation of Providence that it should be so. If no one could rent a piece of glebe-land without a genius for mechanical inventions, or stand behind a counter without a large benevolence of soul, what would become of the commercial and agricultural interest of this great (and once flourishing) country ? I would not be understood as saying that there is not what may be called *a genius for business*, an extraordinary capacity for affairs, quickness and comprehension united, an insight into character, an acquaintance with a number of particular circumstances, a variety of expedients, a tact for finding out what will do: I grant all this (in Liverpool and Manchester they would persuade you that your merchant and manufacturer is your only gentleman and scholar)—but still, making every allowance for the difference between the liberal trader and the sneaking shop-keeper, I doubt whether the most surprising success is to be accounted for from any such unusual attainments, or whether a man's making half a million of money is a proof of his capacity for thought in general. It is much oftener owing to views and wishes bounded but constantly directed to one particular object. To succeed, a man should aim only at success. The child of Fortune should resign himself into the hands of Fortune. A plotting head frequently overreaches itself: a mind confident of its resources and calculating powers enters on critical speculations, which, in a game depending so much on chance and unforeseen events, and not entirely on intellectual skill, turn the odds greatly against any one in the long run. The rule of business is to take what you can get, and keep what you have got: or an eagerness in seizing every opportunity that offers for promoting your own interest, and a plodding persevering industry in making the most of the advantages you have already obtained, are the most effectual as well as safest ingredients in the composition of the mercantile character. The world is a book in which the *Chapter of Accidents* is none of the least considerable; or it is a machine that must be left, in a great measure, to turn itself. The most that a worldly-minded man can do is, to stand at the receipt of custom, and be constantly on the look-out for windfalls. The true devotee in this way waits for the revelations of Fortune as the poet waits for the inspiration of the Muse, and does not rashly anticipate her favors. He must be neither capricious nor wilful. I have known people untrammelled in the ways of business, but with so intense an apprehension of their own interest, that they would grasp at the slightest possibility of gain as a certainty, and were led into as many mistakes by an over-griping usurious disposition as they could have been by the most thoughtless extravagance.—We hear a great outcry about the want of judgment in men of genius. It is not a want of judgment, but an excess of other things. They err knowingly, and are wilfully blind. The understanding is out of the question. The profound judgment which soberer people pique themselves upon is in truth a want of passion and imagination. Give them an interest in anything, a sudden fancy, a bait for their favorite foible, and who so besotted as they? Stir their feelings, and farewell to their prudence! The understanding operates as a motive to action only in the silence of the passions. I have heard people of a sanguine temperament reproached with betting according to their wishes, instead of their opinion who should win: and I have seen those who reproached them do the very same thing the instant their own vanity or prejudices were concerned. The most mechanical people, once thrown off their balance, are the most extravagant and fantastical. What passion is there so unmeaning and irrational as avarice itself? The Dutch went mad for tulips, and —— —— for love!—To return to what was said a little way back, a question might be started, whether, as thought relates to the whole circumference of things and interests, and business is confined to a very small part of them, *viz.* to a knowledge of a man's own affairs and the making of his own fortune, whether a talent for the latter will not generally exist in proportion to the narrowness and grossness of his ideas, nothing drawing his attention out of his own sphere, or giving him an interest except in those things which he can realize and bring home to himself in the most undoubted shape? To the man of business all the world is a fable but the Stock-Exchange: to the money-getter nothing has a real existence that he cannot convert into a tangible feeling, that he does not recognize as property, that he cannot "measure with a two-foot rule or count upon ten fingers." The want of thought, of imagination, drives the practical man upon immediate realities: to the poet or philosopher all is real and interesting that is true or possible, that can reach in its consequences to others, or be made a subject of curious speculation to himself!

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* When Bonaparte left the Chamber of Deputies to go and fight his last fatal battle, he advised them not to be debating the forms of Constitutions when the enemy was at their gates. Benjamin Constant thought otherwise. He wanted to play a game at *cat's-cradle* between the Republicans and Royalists, and lost his match. He did not care, so that he hampered a more efficient man than himself.

But is it right, then, to judge of action by the quantity of thought implied in it, any more than it would be to condemn a life of contemplation for being inactive? Or has not everything a source and principle of its own, to which we should refer it, and not to the principles of other things? He who succeeds in any pursuit in which others fail, may be presumed to have qualities of some sort or other which they are without. If he has not brilliant wit, he may have solid sense; if he has not subtlety of understanding, he may have energy and firmness of purpose, if he has only a few advantages, he may have modesty and prudence to make the most of what he possesses. Propriety is one great matter in the conduct of life; which, though like a graceful carriage of the body, it is neither definable nor striking at first sight, is the result of finely balanced feelings, and lends a secret strength and charm to the whole character.

——Quicquid agit, quoquo vestigia vertit,
Componit furtim, subsequiturque decor.

There are more ways than one in which the various faculties of the mind may unfold themselves. Neither words, nor ideas reducible to words, constitute the utmost limit of human capacity. Man is not a merely talking nor a merely reasoning animal. Let us then take him as he is, instead of "curtailing him of nature's fair proportions" to suit our previous notions. Doubtless, there are great characters both in active and contemplative life. There have been heroes as well as sages, legislators and founders of religion, historians and able statesmen and generals, inventors of useful arts and instruments, and explorers of undiscovered countries, as well as writers and readers of books. It will not do to set all these aside under any fastidious or pedantic distinction. Comparisons are odious, because they are impertinent, and lead only to the discovery of defects by making one thing the standard of another which has no relation to it. If, as some one proposed, we were to institute an inquiry, "Which was the greatest man, Milton or Cromwell, Bonaparte or Rubens?"—we should have all the authors and artists on one side, and all the military men and the whole diplomatic body on the other, who would set to work with all their might to pull in pieces the idol of the other party; and the longer the dispute continued, the more would each grow dissatisfied with his favorite, though determined to allow no merit to any one else. The mind is not well competent to take in the full impression of more than one style of excellence or one extraordinary character at once; contradictory claims puzzle and stupefy it; and however admirable any individual may be in himself, and unrivalled in his particular way, yet if we try him by others in a totally opposite class, that is, if we consider not what he was but what he was not, he will be found to be nothing. We do not reckon up the excellences on either side, for then these would satisfy the mind and put an end to the comparison: we have no way of exclusively setting up our favorite but by running down his supposed rival; and for the gorgeous hues of Rubens, the lofty conceptions of Milton, the deep policy and cautious daring of Cromwell, or the dazzling exploits and fatal ambition of the modern chieftain, the poet is transformed into a pedant, the artist sinks into a mechanic, the politician turns out no better than a knave, and the hero is exalted into a madman. It is as easy to get the start of our antagonist in argument by frivolous and vexatious objections to one side of the question, as it is difficult to do full and heaped justice to the other. If I am asked which is the greatest of those who have been the greatest in different ways, I answer the one that we happen to be thinking of at the time, for while that is the case, we can conceive of nothing higher. If there is a propensity in the vulgar to admire the achievements of personal prowess or instances of fortunate enterprise too much, it cannot be denied that those who have to weigh out and dispense the meed of fame in books, have been too much disposed, by a natural bias, to confine all merit and talent to the productions of the pen, or at least to those works which, being artificial or abstract representations of things, are transmitted to posterity, and cried up as models in their kind. This, though unavoidable, is hardly just. Actions pass away and are forgotten, or are only discernible in their effects: conquerors, statesmen, and kings live by their names stamped on the page of history. Hume says rightly that more people think about Virgil and Homer (and that continually) than ever trouble their heads about Cæsar or Alexander. In fact, poets are a longer-lived race than heroes: they breathe more of the air of immortality. They survive more entire in their thoughts and acts. We have all that Virgil or Homer did, as much as if we had lived at the same time with them: we can hold their works in our hands, or lay them on our pillows, or put them to our lips. Scarcely a trace of what the others did is left upon the earth, so as to be visible to common eyes. The one, the dead authors, are living men, still breathing and moving in their writings. The others, the conquerors of the world, are but the ashes in an urn. The sympathy (so to speak) between thought and thought is more intimate and vital than that between thought and action. Thought is linked to thought as flame kindles into flame: the tribute of admiration to the *manes* of departed heroism is like burning incense in a marble monument. Words, ideas, feelings, with the progress of time harden into substances: things, bodies, actions, moulder away, or melt into a sound, into thin air! Yet though the Schoolmen in the middle ages disputed more about the texts of Aristotle than the battle of Arbela, perhaps Alexander's Generals in his life-time admired his pupil as much, and liked him better. For not only a man's actions are effaced and vanish with him; his virtuous and generous qualities die with him also:—his intellect only is immortal, and bequeathed unimpaired to posterity. Words are the only things that last for ever.

If however the empire of words and general knowledge is more durable in proportion as it is abstracted and attenuated, it is less immediate and dazzling: if authors are as good after they are dead as when they were living, while living they might as well be dead: and moreover with respect to actual ability, to write a book is not the only proof of taste, sense, or spirit, as pedants would have us suppose. To do anything well, to paint a picture, to fight a battle, to make a plough or a threshing-machine, requires, one would think, as much skill and judgment as to talk about or write a description of it when done. Words are universal, intelligible signs, but they are not the only real, existing things. Did not Julius Cæsar show himself as much of a man in conducting his campaigns as in composing his Commentaries? Or was the Retreat of the Ten Thousand under Xenophon, or his work of that name, the most consummate performance? Or would not Lovelace, supposing him to have existed and to have conceived and executed all his fine stratagems on the spur of the occasion, have been as clever a fellow as Richardson, who invented them in cold blood? If to conceive and describe an heroic character is the height of a literary ambition, we can hardly make it out that to be and to do all that the wit of man can feign, is nothing. To use means to ends, to set causes in motion, to wield the machine of society, to subject the wills of others to your own, to manage abler men than yourself by means of that which is stronger in them than their wisdom, *viz.* their weakness and their folly, to calculate the resistance of ignorance and prejudice to your designs, and by obviating to turn them to account, to foresee a long, obscure, and complicated train of events, of chances and openings of success, to unwind the web of others' policy, and weave your own out of it, to judge of the effects of things not in the abstract but with reference to all their bearings, ramifications and impediments, to understand character thoroughly, to see latent talent or lurking treachery, to know mankind for what they are, and use them as they deserve, to have a purpose steadily in view and to effect it after removing every obstacle, to master others and be true to yourself, asks power and knowledge, both nerves and brain.

Such is the sort of talent that may be shown, and that has been possessed by the great leaders on the stage of the world. To accomplish great things argues, I imagine, great resolution: to design great things implies no common mind. Ambition is in some sort genius. Though I would rather wear out my life in arguing a broad speculative question than in caballing for the election to a wardmote, or canvassing for votes in a rotten borough, yet I should think that the loftiest Epicurean philosopher might descend from his punctilio to identify himself with the support of a great principle, or to prop a falling state. This is what the legislators and founders of empire did of old; and the permanence of their institutions showed the depth of the principles from which they emanated. A tragic poem is not the worse for acting well: if it will not bear this test, it savors of effeminacy. Well-digested schemes will stand the touchstone of experience. Great thoughts reduced to practice become great acts. Again, great acts grow out of great occasions, and great occasions spring from great principles, working changes in society, and tearing it up by the roots. But still I conceive that a genius for action depends essentially on the strength of the will rather than on that of the understanding; that the long-headed calculation of causes and consequences arises from the energy of the first cause, which is the will, setting others in motion and prepared to anticipate the results; that its sagacity is activity delighting in meeting difficulties and adventures more than half way, and its wisdom courage not to shrink from danger, but to redouble its efforts with opposition. Its humanity, if it has much, is magnanimity to spare the vanquished, exulting in power but not prone to mischief, with good sense enough to be aware of the instability of fortune, and with some regard to reputation. What may serve as a criterion to try this question by is the following consideration, that we sometimes find as remarkable a deficiency of the speculative faculty coupled with great strength of will and consequent success in active life, as we do a want of voluntary power and total incapacity for business, frequently joined to the highest mental qualifications. In some cases it will happen that "to be wise, is to be obstinate." If you are deaf to reason but stick to your own purposes, you will tire others out, and bring them over to your way of thinking. Self-will and blind prejudice are the best defence of actual power and exclusive advantages. The forehead of the late king was not remarkable for the character of intellect, but the lower part of his face was expressive of strong passions and fixed resolution. Charles Fox had an animated, intelligent eye, and brilliant, elastic forehead (with a nose indicating fine taste), but the lower features were weak, unsettled, fluctuating, and without *purchase*—it was in them the Whigs were defeated. What a fine iron binding Bonaparte had round his face, as if it had been cased in steel! What sensibility about the mouth! What watchful penetration in the eye! What a smooth, unruffled forehead! Mr. Pitt, with little sunken eyes, had a high, retreating forehead, and a nose expressing pride and aspiring self-opinion: it was on that (with submission) that he suspended the decision of the House of Commons, and dangled the Opposition as he pleased. Lord Castlereagh is a man rather deficient than redundant in words and topics. He is not (any more than St. Augustine was, in the opinion of La Fontaine) so great a wit as Rabelais, nor is he so great a philosopher as Aristotle: but he has that in him which is not to be trifled with. He has a noble mask of a face (not well filled up in the expression, which is relaxed and dormant), with a fine person and manner. On the strength of these he hazards his speeches in the House. He has also a knowledge of mankind, and of the composition of the House. He takes a thrust which he cannot parry on his shield—is, "all tranquillity and smiles" under a volley of abuse, sees when to pay a compliment to a wavering antagonist, soothes the melting mood of his hearers, or gets up a speech full of indignation, and knows how to bestow his attentions on that great public body, whether he wheedles or bullies, so as to bring it to compliance. With a long reach of undefined purposes (the result of a temper too indolent for thought, too violent for repose) he has equal perseverance and pliancy in bringing his objects to pass. I would rather be Lord Castlereagh, as far as a sense of power is concerned (principle is out of the question), than such a man as Mr. Canning, who is a mere fluent sophist, and never knows the limits of discretion, or the effect which will be produced by what he says, except as far as florid common-places may be depended on. Bonaparte is referred by Mr. Coleridge to the class of active rather than of intellectual characters: and Cowley has left an invidious but splendid eulogy on Oliver Cromwell, which sets out on much the same principle. "What," he says, "can be more extraordinary, than that a person of mean birth, no fortune, no eminent qualities of body, which have sometimes, or of mind, which have often raised men to the highest dignities, should have the courage to attempt, and the happiness to succeed in, so improbable a design, as the destruction of one of the most ancient and most solidly-founded monarchies upon the earth? That he should have the power or boldness to put his prince and master to an open and infamous death; to banish that numerous and strongly-allied family; to do all this under the name and wages of a Parliament; to trample upon them too as he pleased, and spurn them out of door when he grew weary of them; to raise up a new and unheard-of monster out of their ashes; to stifle that in the very infancy, and set up himself above all things that ever were called sovereign in England; to oppress all his enemies by arms, and all his friends afterwards by artifice; to serve all parties patiently for a while, and to command them victoriously at last; to over-run each corner of the three nations, and overcome with equal facility both the riches of the south and the poverty of the north; to be feared and courted by all foreign princes, and adopted a brother to the Gods of the earth; to call together Parliaments with a word of his pen, and scatter them again with the breath of his mouth ; to be humbly and daily petitioned that he would please to be hired, at the rate of two millions a year, to be the master of those who had hired him before to be their servant ; to have the estates and lives of three kingdoms as much at his disposal, as was the little inheritance of his father, and to be as noble and liberal in the spending of them ; and lastly (for there is no end of all the particulars of his glory) to bequeath all this with one word to his posterity ; to die with peace at home, and triumph abroad ; to be buried among kings, and with more than regal solemnity ; and to leave a name behind him, not to be extinguished but with the whole world ; which as it is now too little for his praises, so might have been too [narrow] for his conquests, if the short line of his human life could have been stretched out to the extent of his immortal designs !"

Cromwell was a bad speaker and a worse writer. Milton wrote his dispatches for him in elegant and erudite Latin : and the pen of the one, like the sword of the other, was "sharp and sweet." We have not that union in modern times of the heroic and literary character which was common among the ancients. Julius Cæsar and Xenophon recorded their own acts with equal clearness of style and modesty of temper. The Duke of Wellington (worse off than Cromwell) is obliged to get Mr. Mudford to write the History of his Life. Sophocles, Æschylus, and Socrates, were distinguished for their military prowess among their contemporaries, though now only remembered for what they did in poetry and philosophy. Cicero and Demosthenes, the two greatest orators of antiquity, appear to have been cowards : nor does Horace seem to give a very favorable picture of his martial achievements. But in general there was not that division in the labors of the mind and body among the Greeks and Romans that has been introduced among us either by the progress of civilisation or by a greater slowness and inaptitude of parts. The French, for instance, appear to unite a number of accomplishments, the literary character and the man of the world, better than we do. Among us a scholar is almost another name for a pedant or a clown : it is not so with them. Their philosophers and wits went into the world, and mingled in the society of the fair. Of this there needs no other proof than the spirited print of most of the great names in French literature, to whom Molière is reading a comedy in the presence of the celebrated Ninon de l'Enclos. D'Alembert, one of the first mathematicians of his age, was a wit, a man of gallantry and letters. With us a learned man is absorbed in himself and some particular study, and minds nothing else. There is something ascetic and impracticable in his very constitution, and he answers to the description of the Monk in Spenser—

> "From every work he challenged essoin
> For contemplation's sake"——

Perhaps the superior importance attached to the institutions of religion, as well as the more abstracted and visionary nature of its objects, has led (as a general result) to a wider separation between thought and action in modern times. Ambition is of a higher and more heroic strain than avarice. Its objects are nobler, and the means by which it attains its ends less mechanical.

> "Better be lord of them that riches have,
> Than riches have myself, and be their servile slave."

The incentive to ambition is the love of power; the spur to avarice is either the fear of poverty, or a strong desire of self-indulgence. The amassers of fortunes seem divided into two opposite classes, lean, penurious-looking mortals, or jolly fellows who are determined to get possession of, because they want to enjoy the good things of the world. The one have famine and a work-house always before their eyes; the others, in the fullness of their persons and the robustness of their constitutions, seem to bespeak the reversion of a landed estate, rich acres, fat beeves, a substantial mansion, costly clothing, a chine and turkey, choice wines, and all other good things consonant to the wants and full-fed desires of their bodies. Such men charm fortune by the sleekness of their aspects and the goodly rotundity of their honest faces, as the others scare away poverty by their wan, meagre looks. The last starve themselves into riches by care and carking: the first eat, drink, and sleep their way into the good things of this life. The greatest number of *warm* men in the city are good, jolly fellows. Look at Sir William ———, Callipash and callipee are written in his face: he rolls about his unwieldy bulk in a sea of turtle-soup. How many haunches of venison does he carry on his back! He is larded with jobs and contracts; he is stuffed and swelled out with layers of bank-notes, and invitations to dinner! His face hangs out a flag of defiance to mischance: the roguish twinkle in his eye with which he lures half the city and beats Alderman ——— hollow, is a smile reflected from heaps of unsunned gold! Nature and Fortune are not so much at variance as to differ about this fellow. To enjoy the goods the Gods provide us, is to deserve it. Nature meant him for a Knight, Alderman, and City-Member; and Fortune laughed to see the goodly person and prospects of the man!* I am not, from certain early prejudices, much given to admire the ostentatious marks of wealth (there are persons enough to admire them without me)—but I confess, there is something in the look of the old banking-houses in Lombard-street, the posterns covered with mud, the doors opening sullenly and silently, the absence of all pretence, the darkness and the gloom within, the gleaming of lamps in the day-time,

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* A thorough fitness for any end implies the means. Where there is a will, there is a way. A real passion, an entire devotion to any object always succeeds. The strong sympathy with what we wish and imagine, realizes it, dissipates all obstacles, and removes all scruples. The disappointed lover may complain as much as he pleases. He was himself to blame. He was a half-witted, *wishy-washy* fellow. His love might be as great as he makes it out: but it was not his ruling passion. His fear, his pride, his vanity was greater. Let any one's whole soul be steeped in this passion, let him think and care for nothing else, let nothing divert, cool, or intimidate him, let the *ideal* feeling become an actual one and take possession of his whole faculties, looks and manner, let the same voluptuous hopes and wishes govern his actions in the presence of his mistress that haunt his fancy in her absence, and I will answer for his success. But I will not answer for the success of "a dish of skimmed milk" in such a case. I could always get to see a fine collection of pictures myself. The fact is, I was set upon it. Neither the surliness of porters, nor the impertinence of footmen could keep me back. I had a portrait of Titian in my eye, and nothing could put me out in my determination. If that had not (as it were) been looking on me all the time I was battling my way, I should have been irritated or disconcerted, and gone away. But my liking to the end conquered my scruples or aversion to the means. I never understood the Scotch character but on these occasions. I would not take "No" for an answer. If I had wanted a place under government, or a writership to India, I could have got it from the same importunity, and on the same terms.

> "Like a faint shadow of uncertain light,"

that almost realizes the poetical conception of the cave of Mammon in Spenser, where dust and cobwebs concealed the roofs and pillars of solid gold, and lifts the mind quite off its ordinary hinges. The account of the manner in which the founder of Guy's Hospital accumulated his immense wealth has always to me something romantic in it, from the same force of contrast. He was a little shop-keeper, and out of his savings bought Bibles, and purchased seamen's tickets in Queen Anne's wars, by which he left a fortune of two hundred thousand pounds. The story suggests the idea of a magician; nor is there anything in the Arabian Nights that looks more like a fiction.

ESSAY XI.

On a portrait of an English lady, by Vandyke.

The portrait I speak of is in the Louvre, where it is numbered 416, and the only account of it in the *Catalogue* is that of a *Lady and her daughter*. It is companion to another whole-length by the same artist, No. 417, of a *Gentleman and a little girl*. Both are evidently English.

The face of the lady has nothing very remarkable in it, but that it may be said to be the very perfection of the English female face. It is not particularly beautiful, but there is a sweetness in it, and a goodness conjoined, which is inexpressibly delightful. The smooth ivory forehead is a little ruffled, as if some slight cause of uneasiness, like a cloud, had just passed over it. The eyes are raised with a look of timid attention ; the mouth is compressed with modest sensibility ; the complexion is delicate and clear ; and over the whole figure (which is seated) there reign the utmost propriety and decorum. The habitual gentleness of the character seems to have been dashed with some anxious thought or momentary disquiet, and, like the shrinking flower, in whose leaves the lucid drop yet trembles, looks out and smiles at the storm that is overblown. A mother's tenderness, a mother's fear, appears to flutter on the surface, and on the extreme verge of the expression, and not to have quite subsided into thoughtless indifference or mild composure. There is a reflection of the same expression in the little child at her knee, who turns her head round with a certain appearance of constraint and innocent wonder ; and perhaps it is the difficulty of getting her to sit (or to sit still) that has caused the transient contraction of her mother's brow,—that lovely, unstained mirror of pure affection, too fair, too delicate, too soft and feminine for the breath of serious misfortune ever to come near, or not to crush it. It is a face, in short, of the greatest purity and sensibility, sweetness and simplicity, or such as Chaucer might have described

> "Where all is conscience and tender heart."

I have said that it is an English face; and I may add (without being invidious) that it is not a French one. I will not say that they have no face to equal this; of that I am not a judge; but I am sure they have no face equal to this, in the qualities by which it is distinguished. They may have faces as amiable, but then the possessors of them will be conscious of it. There may be equal elegance, but not the same ease; there may be even greater intelligence, but without the innocence; more vivacity, but then it will run into petulance or coquetry; in short, there may be every other good quality but a total absence of all pretension to or wish to make a display of it, but the same unaffected modesty and simplicity. In French faces (and I have seen some that were charming both for the features and expression) there is a varnish of insincerity, a something theatrical or meretricious; but here, every particle is pure to the "last recesses of the mind." The face (such as it is, and it has a considerable share both of beauty and meaning) is without the smallest alloy of affectation. There is no false glitter in the eyes to make them look brighter: no little wrinkles about the corners of the eyelids, the effect of self-conceit; no pursing up of the mouth, no significant leer, no primness, no extravagance, no assumed levity or gravity. You have the genuine text of nature without gloss or comment. There is no heightening of conscious charms to produce greater effect, no studying of airs and graces in the glass of vanity. You have not the remotest hint of the milliner, the dancing-master, the dealer in paints and patches. You have before you a real English lady of the seventeenth century, who looks like one, because she cannot look otherwise; whose expression of sweetness, intelligence, or concern is just what is natural to her, and what the occasion requires; whose entire demeanor is the emanation of her habitual sentiments and disposition, and who is as free from guile or affectation as the little child by her side. I repeat that this is not the distinguishing character of the French physiognomy, which, at its best, is often spoiled by a consciousness of what it is, and a restless desire to be something more.

Goodness of disposition, with a clear complexion and handsome features, is the chief ingredient in English beauty. There is a great difference in this respect between Vandyke's portraits of women and Titian's, of which we may find examples in the Louvre. The picture, which goes by the name of his *Mistress*, is one of the most celebrated of the latter. The neck of this picture is like a broad crystal mirror; and the hair which she holds so carelessly in her hand is like meshes of beaten gold. The eyes which roll in their ample sockets, like two shining orbs, and which are turned away from the spectator, only dart their glances the more powerfully into the soul; and the whole picture is a paragon of frank cordial grace, and transparent brilliancy of coloring. Her tight boddice compresses her full but finely proportioned waist; while the tucker in part conceals and almost clasps the snowy bosom. But you never think of anything beyond the personal attractions, and a certain sparkling intelligence. She is not marble, but a fine piece of animated clay. There is none of that retired and shrinking character, that modesty of demeanor, that sensitive delicacy, that starts even at the shadow of evil—that are so evidently to be traced in the portrait by Vandyke. Still there is no positive vice, no meanness, no hypocrisy, but an unconstrained elastic spirit of self-enjoyment, more bent on the end than scrupulous about the means; with firmly braced nerves, and a tincture of vulgarity. She is not like an English lady, nor like a lady at all; but she is a very fine servant-girl, conscious of her advantages, and willing to make the most of them. In fact, Titian's *Mistress* answers exactly, I conceive, to the idea conveyed by the English word, *sweetheart*.—The Marchioness of Guasto is a fairer comparison. She is by the supposition a lady, but still an Italian one. There is a honeyed richness about the texture of the skin, and her air is languid from a sense of pleasure. Her dress, though modest, has the marks of studied coquetry about it; it touches the very limits which it dares not pass; and her eyes which are bashful and downcast, do not seem to droop under the fear of observation, but to retire from the gaze of kindled admiration,

——"As if they thrill'd
Frail hearts, yet quenched not!"

One might say, with Othello, of the hand with which she holds the globe that is offered to her acceptance ——

——— "This hand of your's requires
A sequester from liberty, fasting and pray'r,
Much castigation, exercise devout;
For here's a young and *melting* devil here,
That commonly rebels."

The hands of Vandyke's portrait have the purity and coldness of marble. The color of the face is such as might be breathed upon it by the refreshing breeze; that of the Marchioness of Guasto's is like the glow it might imbibe from a golden sunset. The expression in the English lady springs from her duties and her affections; that of the Italian Countess inclines more to her ease and pleasures. The Marchioness of Guasto was one of three sisters, to whom, it is said, the inhabitants of Pisa proposed to pay divine honors, in the manner that beauty was worshipped by the fabulous enthusiasts of old. Her husband seems to have participated in the common infatuation, from the fanciful homage that is paid to her in this allegorical composition; and if she was at all intoxicated by the incense offered to her vanity, the painter must be allowed to have "qualified" the expression of it "very craftily."

I pass on to another female face and figure, that of the Virgin, in the beautiful picture of the *Presentation in the Temple*, by Guido. The expression here is *ideal*, and has a reference to visionary objects and feelings. It is marked by an abstraction from outward impressions, a downcast look, an elevated brow, an absorption of purpose, a stillness and resignation, that become the person and the scene in which she is engaged. The color is pale or gone; so that purified from every grossness, dead to worldly passions, she almost seems like a statue kneeling. With knees bent, and hands uplifted, her motionless figure appears supported by a soul within, all whose thoughts, from the low ground of humility, tend heavenward. We find none of the triumphant buoyancy of health and spirit as in the *Titian's Mistress*, nor the luxurious softness of the portrait of the Marchioness of Guasto, nor the flexible, tremulous sensibility, nor the anxious attention to passing circumstances, nor the familiar look of the lady by Vandyke; on the contrary, there is a complete unity and concentration of expression, the whole is wrought up and moulded into one intense feeling, but that feeling fixed on objects remote, refined, and etheriel as the form of the fair supplicant. A still greater contrast to this internal, or as it were, *introverted* expression, is to be found in the group of female heads by the same artist, Guido, in his picture of the *Flight of Paris and Helen*. They are the three last heads on the left-hand side of the picture. They are thrown into every variety of attitude, as if to take the heart by surprise at every avenue. A tender warmth is suffused over their faces; their head-dresses are airy and fanciful, their complexion sparkling and glossy; their features seem to catch pleasure from every surrounding object, and to reflect it back again. Vanity, beauty, gaiety glance from their conscious looks and wreathed smiles, like the changing colors from the ring-dove's neck. To sharpen the effect and point the moral, they are accompanied by a little negro-boy, who holds up the train of elegance, fashion, and voluptuous grace!

Guido was the "genteelest" of painters; he was a poetical Vandyke. The latter could give, with inimitable and perfect skill, the airs and graces of people of fashion under their daily and habitual aspects, or as he might see them in a looking-glass. The former saw them in his "mind's eye," and could transform them into supposed characters and imaginary situations. Still the elements were the same. Vandyke gave them with the *mannerism* of habit and the individual details; Guido, as they were rounded into grace and smoothness by the breath of fancy, and borne along by the tide of sentiment. Guido did not want the *ideal* faculty, though he wanted strength and variety. There is an effeminacy about his pictures, for he gave only the different modifications of beauty. It was the Goddess that inspired him, the Siren that seduced him; and whether as saint or sinner, was equally welcome to him. His creations are as frail as they are fair. They all turn on a passion for beauty, and without this support, are nothing. He could paint beauty combined with pleasure, or sweetness, or grief, or devotion; but unless it were the ground-work and the primary condition of his performance, he became insipid, ridiculous, and extravagant. There is one thing to be said in his favor; he knew his own powers or followed his own inclinations; and the delicacy of his *tact* in general prevented him from attempting subjects uncongenial with it. He "trod the primrose path of dalliance," with equal prudence and modesty. That he is a little monotonous and tame, is all that can be said against him; and he seldom went out of his way to expose his deficiencies in a glaring point of view. He came round to subjects of beauty at last, or gave them that turn. A story is told of his having painted a very lovely head of a girl, and being asked from whom he had taken it, he replied, "From his old man!" This is not unlikely. He is the only great painter (except Correggio) who appears constantly to have subjected what he saw to an imaginary standard. His Magdalens are more beautiful than sorrowful; in his Madonnas there is more of sweetness and modesty than of elevation. He makes but little difference between his heroes and his heroines; his angels are women, and his women angels! If it be said that he repeated himself too often, and has painted too many Magdalens and Madonnas, I can only say in answer, "Would he had painted twice as many!" If Guido wanted compass and variety in his art, it signifies little, since what he wanted is abundantly supplied by others. He had softness, delicacy, and *ideal* grace in a supreme degree, and his fame rests on these as the cloud on the rock. It is to the highest point of excellence in any art or department that we look back with gratitude and admiration, as it is the highest mountain peak that we catch in the distance, and lose sight of only when it turns to air.

I know of no other difference between Raphael and Guido, than that the one was twice the man the other was. Raphael was a bolder genius, and invented according to nature: Guido only made draughts after his own disposition and character

There is a common cant of criticism which makes Titian merely a colorist. What he really wanted was invention: he had expression in the highest degree. I declare I have seen heads of his with more meaning in them than any of Raphael's. But he fell short of Raphael in this, that (except in one or two instances) he could not heighten and adapt the expression that he saw to different and more striking circumstances. He gave more of what he saw than any other painter that ever lived, and in the imitative part of his art had a more universal genius than Raphael had in composition and invention. Beyond the actual and habitual look of nature, however, "the demon that he served" deserted him, or became a very tame one. Vandyke gave more of the general air and manners of fashionable life than of individual character; and the subjects that he treated are neither remarkable for intellect nor passion. They are people of polished manners and placid constitutions; and many of the very best of them are "stupidly good." Titian's portraits, on the other hand, frequently present a much more formidable than inviting appearance. You would hardly trust yourself in a room with them. You do not bestow a cold, leisurely approbation on them, but look to see what they may be thinking of you, not without some apprehension for the result. They have not the clear smooth skins or the even pulse that Vandyke's seem to possess. They are, for the most part, fierce, wary, voluptuous, subtle, haughty. Raphael painted Italian faces as well as Titian. But he threw into them a character of intellect rather than of temperament. In Titian the irritability takes the lead, sharpens and gives direction to the understanding. There seems to be a personal controversy between the spectator and the individual whose portrait he contemplates, which shall be master of the other. I may refer to two portraits in the Louvre, the one by Raphael, the other by Titian (Nos. 1153 and 1210), in illustration of these remarks. I do not know two finer or more characteristic specimens of these masters, each in its way. The one is of a student dressed in black, absorbed in thought, intent on some problem, with the hands crossed and leaning on a table for support, as it were to give freer scope to the labor of the brain, and though the eyes are directed towards you, it is with evident absence of mind. Not so the other portrait, No. 1210. All its faculties are collected to see what it can make of you, as if you had intruded upon it with some hostile design, it takes a defensive attitude, and shows as much vigilance as dignity. It draws itself up, as if to say, "Well, what do you think of me?" and exercises a discretionary power over you. It has "an eye to threaten and command," not to be lost in idle thought, or in ruminating over some abstruse, speculative proposition. It is this intense personal character which, I think, gives the superiority to Titian's portraits over all others, and stamps them with a living and permanent interest. Of other pictures you tire, if you have them constantly before you; of his, never. For other pictures have either an abstracted look and you dismiss them, when you have made up your mind on the subject as a matter of criticism; or an heroic look, and you cannot be always straining your enthusiasm; or an insipid look, and you sicken of it. But whenever you turn to look at Titian's portraits, they appear to be looking at you; there seems to be some question pending between you, as though an intimate friend or inveterate foe were in the room with you; they exert a kind of fascinating power; and there is that exact resemblance of individual nature which is always new and always interesting, because you cannot carry away a mental abstraction of it, and you must recur to the object to revive it in its full force and integrity. I would as soon have Raphael's or most other pictures hanging up in a Collection, that I might pay an occasional visit to them: Titian's are the only ones that I should wish to have hanging in the same room with me for company!

Titian in his portraits appears to have understood the principle of historical design better than anybody. Every part tells, and has a bearing on the whole. There is no one who has such simplicity and repose—no violence, no affectation, no attempt at forcing an effect; insomuch that by the uninitiated he is often condemned as unmeaning and insipid. A turn of the eye, a compression of the lip decides the point. He just draws the face out of its most ordinary state, and gives it the direction he would have it take; but then every part takes the same direction, and the effect of this united impression (which is absolutely momentary and all but habitual) is wonderful. It is that which makes his portraits the most natural and the most striking in the world. It may be compared to the effect of a number of small loadstones, that by acting together lift the greatest weights. Titian seized upon the lines of character in the most original and connected point of view. Thus in his celebrated portrait of Hippolito de Medici, there is a keen, sharpened expression that strikes you, like a blow from the spear that he holds in his hand. The look goes through you ; yet it has no frown, no startling gesticulation no affected penetration. It is quiet, simple, but it almost withers you. The whole face and each separate feature is cast in the same acute or wedge-like form. The forehead is high and narrow, the eye-brows raised and coming to a point in the middle, the nose straight and peaked, the mouth contracted and drawn up at the corners, the chin acute, and the two sides of the face slanting to a point. The number of acute angles which the lines of the face form, are, in fact, a net entangling the attention and subduing the will. The effect is felt at once, though it asks time and consideration to understand the cause. It is a face which you would beware of rousing into anger or hostility, as you would beware of setting in motion some complicated and dangerous machinery. The possessor of it, you may be sure, is no trifler. Such, indeed, was the character of the man. This is to paint true portrait and true history. So if our artist painted a mild and thoughtful expression, all the lines of the countenance were softened and relaxed. If the mouth was going to speak, the whole face was going to speak. It was the same in color. The gradations are infinite, and yet so blended as to be imperceptible. No two tints are the same, though they produce the greatest harmony and simplicity of tone, like flesh itself. "If," said a person, pointing to the shaded side of a portrait of Titian, "you could turn this round to the light, you would find it would be of the same color as the other side !" In short, there is manifest in his portraits a greater tenaciousness and identity of impression than in those of any other painter. Form, color, feeling, character, seemed to adhere to his eye, and to become part of himself ; and his pictures, on this account, "leave stings" in the minds of the spectators ! There is, I grant, the same personal appeal, the same point-blank look in some of Raphael's portraits (see those of a

Princess of Arragon and of Count Castiglione, Nos. 1150 and 1151 as in Titian: but they want the texture of the skin and the minute individual details to stamp them with the same reality. And again, as to the uniformity of outline in the features, this principle has been acted upon and carried to excess by Kneller and other artists. The eyes, the eye-brows, the nose, the mouth, the chin, are rounded off as if they were turned in a *lathe*, or as a peruke-maker arranges the curls of a wig. In them it is vile and mechanical, without any reference to truth of character or nature; and instead of being pregnant with meaning and originality of expression, produces only insipidity and monotony.

Perhaps what is offered above as a key to the peculiar expression of Titian's heads may also serve to explain the difference between painting or copying a portrait. As the perfection of his faces consists in the entire unity and coincidence of all the parts, so the difficulty of ordinary portrait-painting is to bring them to bear at all, or to piece one feature, or one day's labor, on to another. In copying, this difficulty does not occur at all. The human face is not one thing, as the vulgar suppose, nor does it remain always the same. It has infinite varieties which the artist is obliged to notice and to reconcile, or he will make strange work. Not only the light and shade upon it do not continue for two minutes the same: the position of the head constantly varies (or if you are strict with a sitter, he grows sullen and stupid), each feature is in motion every moment, even while the artist is working at it, and in the course of a day the whole expression of the countenance undergoes a change, so that the expression which you gave to the forehead or eyes yesterday is totally incompatible with that which you have to give to the mouth to-day. You can only bring it back again to the same point or give it a consistent construction by an effort of imagination, or a strong feeling of character; and you must connect the features together less by the eye than by the mind. The mere setting down what you see in this medley of successive, teasing, contradictory impressions, would never do; either you must continually efface what you have done the instant before, or if you retain it, you will produce a piece of patchwork, worse than any caricature. There must be a comprehension of the whole, and in truth a *moral sense* (as well as a literal one) to unravel the confusion, and guide you through the labyrinth of shifting muscles and features. You must feel what *this* means, and dive into the hidden soul, in order to know whether *that* is as it ought to be; for you cannot be sure that it remains as it was. Portrait-painting is, then, painting from recollection and from a conception of character, with the object before us to assist the memory and understanding. In copying, on the contrary, one part does not run away and leave you in the lurch, while you are intent upon another. You have only to attend to what is before you, and finish it carefully a bit at a time, and you are sure that the whole will come right. One might parcel it out into squares, as in engraving, and copy one at a time, without seeing or thinking of the rest. I do not say that a conception of the whole, and a feeling of the art will not abridge the labor of copying, or produce a truer likeness; but it is the changeableness or identity of the object that chiefly constitutes the difficulty or facility of imitating it, and, in the latter case, reduces it nearly to a mechanical operation. It is the same in the imitation of *still-life*, where real objects have not a principle of motion in them. It is as easy to produce a *fac-simile* of a table or a chair as to copy a picture, because these things do not stir from their places any more than the features of a portrait stir from theirs. You may therefore bestow any given degree of minute and continued attention on finishing any given part without being afraid that when finished it will not correspond with the rest. Nay, it requires more talent to copy a fine portrait than to paint an original picture of a table or a chair, for the picture has a soul in it, and the table has not. It has been made an objection (and I think a just one) against the extreme high-finishing of the drapery and back-grounds in portraits (to which some schools, particularly the French, are addicted), that it gives an unfinished look to the face, the most important part of the picture. A lady or a gentleman cannot sit quite so long or so still as a lay-figure, and if you finish up each part according to the length of time it will remain in one position, the face will seem to have been painted for the sake of the drapery, not the drapery to set off the face. There is an obvious limit to everything, if we attend to common sense and feeling. If a carpet or a curtain will admit of being finished more than the living face, we finish them less because they excite less interest, and we are less willing to throw away our time and pains upon them. This is the unavoidable result in a natural and well regulated style of art; but what is to be said of a school where no interest is felt in anything, where nothing is known of any object but that it is there, and where superficial and petty details which the eye can explore, and the hand execute, with persevering and systematic indifference, constitute the soul of art?

The expression is the great difficulty in history or portrait-painting, and yet it is the great clue to both. It renders forms doubly impressive from the interest and signification attached to them, and at the same time renders the imitation of them critically nice, by making any departure from the line of truth doubly sensible. Mr. Coleridge used to say, that what gave the romantic and mysterious interest to Salvator's landscapes was their containing some implicit analogy to human or other living forms. His rocks had a latent resemblance to the outline of a human face; his trees had the distorted jagged shape of a satyr's horns and grotesque features. I do not think this is the case; but it may serve to supply us with an illustration of the present question. Suppose a given outline to represent a human face, but to be so disguised by circumstances and little interruptions as to be mistaken for a projecting fragment of a rock in a natural scenery. As long as we conceive of this outline merely as a representation of a rock or other inanimate substance, any copy of it, however rude, will seem the same and as good as the original. Now let the disguise be removed and the general resemblance to a human face pointed out, and what before seemed perfect, will be found to be deficient in the most essential features. Let it be further understood to be a profile of a particular face that we know, and all likeness will vanish from the want of the individual expression, which can only be given by being felt. That is, the imitation of external and visible form is only correct or nearly perfect, when the information of the eye and the direction of the hand are aided and confirmed by the previous knowledge and actual feeling of character in the object represented. The more there is of character and feeling in any object, and the greater sympathy there is with it in the mind of the artist, the closer will be the affinity between the imitation and the thing imitated; as the more there is of character and expression in the object without a proportionable sympathy with it in the imitator, the more obvious will this defect and the imperfection of the copy become. That is, expression is the great test and measure of a genius for painting and the fine arts. The mere imitation of *still-life*, however perfect, can never furnish proofs of the highest skill or talent; for there is an inner sense, a deep intuition into nature that is never unfolded by merely mechanical objects, and which, if it were called out by a new soul being suddenly infused into an inanimate substance, would make the former unconscious representation appear crude and vapid. The eye is sharpened and the hand made more delicate in its tact,

"While by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things."

We could not only *see* but *feel* expression, by the help of the finest of all our senses, the sense of pleasure and pain. He then is the greatest painter who can put the greatest quantity of expression into his works, for this is the nicest and most subtle object of imitation; it is that in which any defect is soonest visible, which must be able to stand the severest scrutiny, and where the power of avoiding errors, extravagance, or tameness, can only be supplied by the fund of moral feeling, the strength or delicacy of the artist's sympathy with the ideal object of his imitation. To see or imitate any given sensible object is one thing, the effect of attention and practice; but to give expression to a face is to collect its meaning from a thousand other sources, is to bring into play the observation and feeling of one's whole life, or an infinity of knowledge bearing upon a single object in different degrees and manners, and implying a loftiness and refinement of character proportioned to the loftiness and refinement of expression delineated. Expression is of all things the least to be mistaken, and the most evanescent in its manifestations. Pope's lines on the character of women may be addressed to the painter who undertakes to embody it:

> ' Come then, the colors and the ground prepare,
> Dip in the rainbow, trick it off in air;
> Choose a firm cloud, before it falls, and in it
> Catch, ere it change, the Cynthia of the minute."

It is a maxim among painters that no one can paint more than his own character, or more than he himself understands or can enter into. Nay, even in copying a head, we have some difficulty in making the features unlike our own. A person with a low forehead or a short chin puts a constraint on himself in painting a high forehead or a long chin. So much has sympathy to do with what is supposed to be a mere act of servile imitation!—To pursue this argument one step further. People sometimes wonder what difficulty there can be in painting, and ask what you have to do but to set down what you see? This is true, but the difficulty is to see what is before you. This is at least as difficult as to learn any trade or language. We imagine that we see the whole of nature, because we are aware of no more than we see of it. We also suppose that any given object, a head, a hand, is one thing, because we see it at once, and call it by one name. But how little we see or know, even of the most familiar face, beyond a vague abstraction, will be evident to every one who tries to recollect distinctly all its component parts, or to draw the most rude outline of it for the first time; or who considers the variety of surface, the numberless lights and shades, the tints of the skin, every particle and pore of which varies, the forms and markings of the features, the combined expression, and all these caught (as far as common use is concerned) by a random glance, and communicated by a passing word. A student, when he first copies a head, soon comes to a stand, or is at a loss to proceed from seeing nothing more in the face than there is in his copy. After a year or two's practice he never knows when to have done, and the longer he has been occupied in copying a face or any particular feature, sees more and more in it, that he has left undone and can never hope to do. There have been only four or five painters who could ever produce a copy of the human countenance really fit to be seen; and even of these few none was ever perfect, except in giving some single quality or partial aspect of nature which happened to fall in with his own particular studies and the bias of his genius, as Raphael the drawing, Rembrandt the light and shade, Vandyke ease and delicacy of appearance, &c. Titian gave more than any one else, and yet he had his defects. After this, shall we say that any the commonest and most uninstructed spectator sees the whole of nature at a single glance, and would be able to stamp a perfect representation of it on the canvas, if he could embody the image in his mind's eye?

I have in this Essay mentioned one or two of the portraits in the Louvre that I like best. The two landscapes which I should most covet, are the one with a Rainbow by Rubens, and the Adam and Eve in Paradise by Poussin. In the first, shepherds are reposing with their flocks under the shelter of a breezy grove, the distances are of air, and the whole landscape seems just washed with the shower that has passed off. The Adam and Eve of Poussin is the full growth and luxuriant expansion of the principle of vegetation. It is the first lovely dawn of creation, when nature played her virgin fancies wild; when all was sweetness and freshness, and the heavens dropped fatness. It is the very *ideal* of landscape-painting, and of the scene it is intended to represent. It throws us back to the first ages of the world, and to the only period of perfect human bliss, which is, however, on the point of being soon disturbed.* I should be contented with these four or five pictures, the Lady by Vandyke, the Titian, the Presentation in the Temple, the Rubens, and the Poussin, or even with faithful copies of them, added to the two which I have of a young Neapolitan Nobleman and of the Hippolito de Medici; and which, when I look at them, recal other times and the feelings with which they were done. It is now twenty years since I made those copies, and I hope to keep them while I live. It seems to me no longer ago than yesterday. Should the next twenty years pass as swiftly, forty years will have glided by me like a dream. By this kind of speculation I can look down as from a slippery height on the beginning and the end of life beneath my feet, and the thought makes me dizzy!

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* I may be allowed to mention here (not for the sake of invidious comparison, but to explain my meaning), Mr. Martin's picture of Adam and Eve asleep in Paradise. It has this capital defect, that there is no *repose* in it. You see two insignificant naked figures, and a preposterous architectural landscape, like a range of buildings over-looking them. They might as well have been represented on the top of the pinnacle of the Temple, with the world and all the glories thereof spread out before them. They ought to have been painted imparadised in one another's arms, shut up in measureless content, with Eden's choicest bowers closing round them, and Nature stooping to clothe them with vernal flowers. Nothing could be too retired, too voluptuous, too sacred from "day's garish eye;" on the contrary, you have a gaudy panoramic view, a glittering barren waste, a triple row of clouds, of rocks, and mountains, piled one upon the other, as if the imagination already bent its idle gaze over that wide world which was so soon to be our place of exile, and the aching, restless spirit of the artist was occupied in building a stately prison for our first parents, instead of decking their bridal bed, and wrapping them in a short-lived dream of bliss.

My taste in pictures is, I believe, very different from that of rich and princely collectors. I would not give two-pence for the whole Gallery at Fonthill. I should like to have a few pictures hung round the room, that speak to me with well-known looks, that touch some string of memory—not a number of varnished, smooth, glittering gewgaws. The taste of the Great in pictures is singular, but not unaccountable. The King is said to prefer the Dutch to the Italian school of painting; and if you hint your surprise at this, you are looked upon as a very Gothic and *outrè* sort of person. You are told, however, by way of consolation,—"To be sure, there is Lord Carlisle likes an Italian picture—Mr. Holwell Carr likes an Italian picture—the Marquis of Stafford is fond of an Italian picture—Sir George Beaumont likes an Italian picture!" These, notwithstanding, are regarded as quaint and daring exceptions to the established rule; and their preference is a species of *leze majesté* in the Fine Arts, as great an eccentricity and want of fashionable etiquette, as if any gentleman or nobleman still preferred old claret to new, when the King is known to have changed his mind on this subject; or was guilty of dipping his forefinger and thumb in the middle of a snuff-box, instead of gradually approximating the contents to the edge of the box, according to the most approved models. One would imagine that the great and exalted in station would like lofty subjects in works of art, whereas they seem to have an almost exclusive predilection for the mean and mechanical. One would think those whose word was law, would be pleased with the great and striking effects of the pencil;* on the contrary, they admire nothing but the little and elaborate. They have a fondness for cabinet and *furniture* pictures, and a proportionable antipathy to works of genius. Even art with them must be servile, to be tolerated. Perhaps the seeming contradiction may be explained thus. Such persons are raised so high above the rest of the species, that the more violent and agitating pursuits of mankind appear to them like the turmoil of ants on a mole-hill. Nothing interests them but their own pride and self-importance. Our passions are to them an impertinence; an expression of high sentiment they rather shrink from as a ludicrous and upstart assumption of equality. They therefore like what glitters to the eye, what is smooth to the touch; but they shun, by an instinct of sovereign taste, whatever has a soul in it, or implies a reciprocity of feeling. The Gods of the earth can have no interest in anything human; they are cut off from all sympathy with the "bosoms and businesses of men." Instead of requiring to be wound up beyond their habitual feeling of stately dignity, they wish to have the springs of over-strained pretension let down, to be relaxed with "trifles light as air," to be amused with the familiar and frivolous, and to have the world appear a scene of *still-life*, except as they disturb it! The little in thought and internal sentiment is a natural relief and set off to the oppressive sense of external magnificence. Hence kings babble and repeat they know not what. A childish dotage often accompanies the consciousness of absolute power. Repose is somewhere necessary, and the soul sleeps while the senses gloat around! Besides the mechanical and high-finished style of art may be considered as something *done to order*. It is a task to be executed more or less perfectly, according to the price given, and the industry of the artist. We stand by, as it were, to see the work done, insist upon a greater degree of neatness and accuracy, and exercise a sort of petty, jealous jurisdiction over each particular. We are judges of the minuteness of the details, and though ever so nicely executed, as they give us no ideas beyond what we had before, we do not feel humbled in the comparison. The artizan scarcely rises into the artist; and the name of genius is degraded rather than exalted in his person. The performance is so far ours that we have paid for it, and the highest price is all that is necessary to produce the highest finishing. But it is not so in works of genius and imagination. Their price is above rubies. The inspiration of the Muse comes not with the *fiat* of a monarch, with the donation of a patron; and, therefore, the Great turn with disgust or effeminate indifference from the mighty masters of the Italian school, because such works baffle and confound their self-love, and make them feel that there is something in the mind of man which they can neither give nor take away.

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* The Duke of Wellington, it is said, cannot enter into the merits of Raphael; but he admires "the spirit and fire" of Tintoret. I do not wonder at this bias. A sentiment probably never dawned upon his Grace's mind; but he may be supposed to relish the dashing execution and *hit or miss* manner of the Venetian artist. Oh, Raphael! well is it that it was one who did not understand thee, that blundered upon the destruction of humanity!

"Quam nihil ad tuum, Papiniane, ingenium!"

ESSAY XII.

On Dreams.

Dr. Spurzheim, in treating of the *Physiology of the Brain*, has the following curious passage:

"The state of somnambulism equally proves the plurality of the organs. This is a state of incomplete sleep, wherein several organs are watching. It is known that the brain acts upon the external world by means of voluntary motion, of the voice, and of the five external senses. Now, if in sleeping some organs be active, dreams take place; if the action of the brain be propagated to the muscles, there follow motions; if the action of the brain be propagated to the vocal organs, the sleeping person speaks. Indeed, it is known that sleeping persons dream and speak; others dream, speak, hear, and answer; others still dream, rise, do various things and walk. This latter state is called somnambulism, that is, the state of walking during sleep. Now, as the ear can hear, so the eyes may see, while the other organs sleep; and there are facts quite positive which prove that several persons in the state of somnambulism have seen, but always with open eyes. There are also convulsive fits, in which the patients see without hearing, and *vice versâ*. Some somnambulists do things of which they are not capable in a state of watching; and dreaming persons reason sometimes better than they do when awake. This phenomenon is not astonishing," &c.—Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim, p. 217.

There is here a very singular mixing up of the flattest truisms with the most gratuitous assumptions; so that the one being told with great gravity, and the other delivered with the most familiar air, one is puzzled in a cursory perusal to distinguish which is which. This is an art of stultifying the reader, like that of the juggler, who shows you some plain matter-of-fact experiment just as he is going to play off his capital trick. The mind is, by this alternation of style, thrown off its guard; and between wondering first at the absurdity, and then at the superficiality of the work, becomes almost a convert to it. A thing exceedingly questionable is stated so roundly, you think there must be something in it: the plainest proposition is put in so doubtful and cautious a manner, you conceive the writer must see a great deal farther into the subject than you do. You mistrust your ears and eyes, and are in a fair way to resign the use of your understanding. It is a fine style of *mystifying*. Again, it is the practice with the German school, and in particular with Dr. Spurzheim, to run counter with common sense and the best authenticated opinions. They must always be more knowing than everybody else, and treat the wisdom of the ancients, and the wisdom of the moderns, much in the same supercilious way. It has been taken for granted generally that people see with their eyes; and therefore it is stated in the above passage as a discovery of the author, "imparted in dreadful secresy," that sleep-walkers always see with their eyes open. The meaning of which is, that we are not to give too implicit or unqualified an assent to the principle, at which modern philosophers have arrived with some pains and difficulty, that we acquire our ideas of external objects through the senses. The *transcendental* sophists wish to back out of that, as too conclusive and well-defined a position. They would be glad to throw the whole of what has been done on this question into confusion again, in order to begin *de novo*, like children who construct houses with cards, and when the pack is built up, shuffle them all together on the table again. These intellectual Sysiphuses are always rolling the stone of knowledge up a hill, for the perverse pleasure of rolling it down again. Having gone as far as they can in the direction of reason and good sense, rather than seem passive or the slaves of any opinion, they turn back with a wonderful look of sagacity to all sorts of exploded prejudices and absurdity. It is a pity that we cannot *let well done alone*, and that after laboring for centuries to remove ignorance, we set our faces with the most wilful officiousness against the stability of knowledge. The *Physiognomical System* of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim is full of this disgusting cant. We are still only to *believe* *in all unbelief*—in what they tell us. The less credulous we are of other things, the more faith we shall have in reserve for them: by exhausting our stock of scepticism and caution on such obvious matters of fact as that people always see with their eyes open, we shall be prepared to swallow their crude and extravagant theories whole, and not be astonished at "the phenomenon, that persons sometimes reason better asleep than awake!"

I have alluded to this passage because I myself am (or used some time ago to be) a sleep-walker; and know how the thing is. In this sort of disturbed, unsound sleep, the eyes are not closed, and are attracted by the light. I used to get up and go towards the window, and make violent efforts to throw it open. The air in some measure revived me, or I might have tried to fling myself out. I saw objects indistinctly, the houses, for instance, facing me on the opposite side of the street; but still it was some time before I could recognize them or recollect where I was: that is, I was still asleep, and the dimness of my senses (as far as it prevailed) was occasioned by the greater numbness of my memory. This phenomenon is not astonishing, unless we choose in all such cases to put the cart before the horse. For in fact, it is the mind that sleeps, and the senses (so to speak) only follow the example. The mind dozes, and the eyelids close in consequence: we do not go to sleep, because we shut our eyes. I can, however, speak to the fact of the eyes being open, when their sense is shut; or rather, when we are unable to draw just inferences from it. It is generally in the night-time indeed, or in a strange place, that the circumstance happens; but as soon as the light dawns upon the recollection, the obscurity and perplexity of the senses clear up. The external impression is made before, much in the same manner as it is after we are awake; but it does not lead to the usual train of associations connected with that impression; *e. g.* the name of the street or town where we are, who lives at the opposite house, how we came to sleep in the room where we are, &c.; all which are ideas belonging to our waking experience, and are at this time cut off or greatly disturbed by sleep. It is just the same as when persons recover from a swoon, and fix their eyes unconsciously on those about them, for a considerable time before they recollect where they are. Would any one but a

German physiologist think it necessary to assure us that at this time they see, but with their eyes open, or pretend that though they have lost all memory or understanding during their fainting fit, their minds then act more vigorously and freely than ever, because they are not distracted by outward impressions? The appeal is made to the outward sense, in the instances we have seen; but the mind is deaf to it, because its functions are for the time gone. It is ridiculous to pretend with this author, that in sleep some of the organs of the mind rest, while others are active; it might as well be pretended that in sleep one eye watches while the other is shut. The stupor is general: the faculty of thought itself is impaired; and whatever ideas we have, instead of being confined to any particular faculty or the impressions of any one sense, and invigorated thereby, float at random from object to object, from one class of impressions to another, without coherence or control. The *conscious* or connecting link between our ideas, which forms them into separate groups or compares different parts and views of a subject together, seems to be that which is principally wanting in sleep; so that any idea that presents itself in this anarchy of the mind is lord of the ascendant for the moment, and is driven out by the next straggling notion that comes across it. The bundles of thought are, as it were, united, loosened from a common centre, and drift along the stream of fancy as it happens. Hence the confusion (not the concentration of the faculties) that continually takes place in this state of half-perception. The mind takes in but one thing at a time, but one part of a subject, and therefore cannot correct its sudden and heterogeneous transitions from one momentary impression to another by a larger grasp of understanding. Thus we confound one person with another, merely from some accidental coincidence, the name or the place where we have seen them, or their having been concerned with us in some particular transaction the evening before. They lose and regain their proper identity perhaps half a dozen times in this rambling way; nor are we able (though we are somewhat incredulous and surprised at these compound creations) to detect the error, from not being prepared to trace the same connected subject of thought to a number of varying and successive ramifications, or to form the idea of a *whole*.

We think that Mr. Such-a-one did so and so: then, from a second face coming across us, like the sliders of a magic lantern, it was not he, but another; then some one calls him by his right name, and he is himself again. We are little shocked at these gross contradictions; for if the mind was capable of perceiving them in all their absurdity, it would not be liable to fall into them. It runs into them for the same reason that it is hardly conscious of them when made.

> ——"That which was now a horse, a bear, a cloud,
> Even with a thought the rack dislimns,
> And makes it indistinct as water is in water."

The difference, so far then, between sleeping and waking seems to be, that in the latter we have a greater range of conscious recollections, a larger discourse of reason, and associate ideas in longer trains and more as they are connected one with another in the order of nature; whereas in the former, any two impressions, that meet or are alike, join company, and then are parted again, without notice, like the froth from the wave. So in madness, there is, I should apprehend, the same tyranny of the imagination over the judgment; that is, the mind has slipped its cable, and single images meet, and jostle, and unite suddenly together, without any power to arrange or compare them with others, with which they are connected in the world of reality. There is a continual phantasmagoria: whatever shapes and colors come together are by the heat and violence of the brain referred to external nature, without regard to the order of time, place, or circumstance. From the same want of continuity, we often forget our dreams so speedily: if we cannot catch them as they are passing out at the door, we never set eyes on them again. There is no clue or thread of imagination to trace them by. In a morning sometimes we have had a dream that we try in vain to recollect; it is gone, like the rainbow from the cloud. At other times (so evanescent is their texture) we forget that we have dreamt at all; and at these times the mind seems to have been a mere blank, and sleep presents only an image of death. Hence has arisen the famous dispute, *Whether the soul thinks always?*—on which Mr. Locke and different writers have bestowed so much tedious and unprofitable discussion ; some maintaining that the mind was like a watch that goes continually, though more slowly and irregularly at one time than another ; while the opposite party contended that it often stopped altogether, bringing the example of sound sleep as an argument, and desiring to know what proof we could have of thoughts passing through the mind, of which it was itself perfectly unconscious, and retained not the slightest recollection. I grant, we often sleep so sound, or have such faint imagery passing through the brain, that if we awake by degrees, we forget it altogether : we recollect our first waking, and perhaps some imperfect suggestions of fancy just before ; but beyond this, all is mere oblivion. But I have observed that whenever I have been waked up suddenly, and not left to myself to recover from this state of mental torpor, I have been always dreaming of something, *i. e.* thinking, according to the tenor of the question. Let any one call you at any time, however fast asleep you may be, you make out their voice in the first surprise to be like some one's you were thinking of in your sleep. Let an accidental noise, the falling of something in the next room, rouse you up, you constantly find something to associate it with, or translate it back into the language of your slumbering thoughts. You are never taken completely at a *nonplus*—summoned, as it were, out of a state of non-existence. It is easy for any one to try the experiment upon himself; that is, to examine every time he is waked up suddenly, so that his waking and sleeping states are brought into immediate contact, whether he has not in all such cases been dreaming of something, and not fairly *caught napping*. For myself, I think I can speak with certainty. It would indeed be rather odd to awake out of such an absolute privation and suspense of thought as is contended for by the partisans of the contrary theory. It would be a peep into the grave, a consciousness of death, an escape from the world of non-entity !

The vividness of our impressions in dreams, of which so much has been said, seems to be rather apparent than real ; or, if this mode of expression should be objected to as unwarrantable, rather physical than mental. It is a vapor, a fume, the effect of the "heat-oppressed brain." The imagination gloats over an idea, and doats at the same time. However warm or brilliant the coloring of these changing appearances, they vanish with the dawn. They are put out by our waking thoughts, as the sun puts out a candle. It is unlucky that we sometimes remember the heroic sentiments, the profound discoveries, the witty repartees we have uttered in our sleep. The one turn to bombast, the others are mere truisms, and the last absolute nonsense. Yet we clothe them certainly with a fancied importance at the moment. This seems to be merely the effervescence of the blood or of the brain, physically acting. It is an odd thing in sleep, that we not only fancy we see different persons, and talk to them, but that we hear them make answers, and startle us with an observation or a piece of news; and though we of course put the answer into their mouths, we have no idea beforehand what it will be, and it takes us as much by surprise as it would in reality. This kind of successful ventriloquism which we practise upon ourselves may perhaps be in some measure accounted for from the shortsightedness and incomplete consciousness which were remarked above as the peculiar characteristics of sleep.

The power of prophesying or foreseeing things in our sleep, as from a higher and more abstracted sphere of thought, need not be here argued upon. There is, however, a sort of profundity in sleep; and it may be usefully consulted as an oracle in this way. It may be said, that the voluntary power is suspended, and things come upon us as unexpected revelations, which we keep out of our thoughts at other times. We may be aware of a danger, that yet we do not choose, while we have the full command of our faculties, to acknowledge to ourselves: the impending event will then appear to us as a dream, and we shall most likely find it verified afterwards. Another thing of no small consequence is, that we may sometimes discover our tacit, and almost unconscious sentiments, with respect to persons or things in the same way. We are not hypocrites in our sleep. The curb is taken off from our passions, and our imagination wanders at will. When awake, we check these rising thoughts, and fancy we have them not. In dreams, when we are off our guard, they return securely and unbidden. We may make this use of the infirmity of our sleeping metamorphosis, that we may repress any feelings of this sort that we disapprove in their incipient state, and detect, ere it be too late, an unwarrantable antipathy or fatal passion. Infants cannot disguise their thoughts from others; and in sleep we reveal the secret to ourselves.

It should appear that I have never been in love, for the same reason. I never dream of the face of any one I am particularly attached to. I have thought almost to agony of the same person for years, nearly without ceasing, so as to have her face always before me, and to be haunted by a perpetual consciousness of disappointed passion, and yet I never in all that time dreamt of this person more than once or twice, and then not vividly. I conceive, therefore, that this perseverance of the imagination in a fruitless track must have been owing to mortified pride, to an intense desire and hope of good in the abstract, more than to love, which I consider as an individual and involuntary passion, and which therefore, when it is strong, must predominate over the fancy in sleep. I think myself into love, and dream myself out of it. I should have made a very bad Endymion, in this sense; for all the time the heavenly Goddess was shining over my head, I should never have had a thought about her. If I had waked and found her gone, I might have been in a considerable *taking*. Coleridge used to laugh at me for my want of the faculty of dreaming; and once, on my saying that I did not like the preternatural stories in the Arabian Nights (for the comic parts I love dearly), he said, "That must be because you never dream. There is a class of poetry built on this foundation, which is surely no inconsiderable part of our nature, since we are asleep and building up imaginations of this sort half our time." I had nothing to say against it: it was one of his conjectural subtleties, in which he excels all the persons I ever knew; but I had some satisfaction in finding afterwards, that I had Bishop Atterbury expressly on my side in this question, who has recorded his detestation of SINBAD THE SAILOR, in an interesting letter to Pope. Perhaps he too did not dream!

Yet I dream sometimes; I dream of the Louvre—*Intus et in cute*. I dreamed I was there a few weeks ago, and that the old scene returned—that I looked for my favorite pictures, and found them gone or erased. The dream of my youth came upon me; a glory and a vision unutterable, that comes no more but in darkness and in sleep: my heart rose up, and I fell on my knees, and lifted up my voice and wept, and I awoke. I also dreamed a little while ago, that I was reading the New Eloise to an old friend, and came to the concluding passages in Julia's farewell letter, which had much the same effect upon me. The words are, "*Trop heureuse d'acheter au prix de ma vie le droit de t'aimer toujours sans crime et de te le dire encore une fois, avant que je meurs!*" I used to sob over this passage twenty years ago; and in this dream about it lately, I seemed to live these twenty years over again in one short moment! I do not dream ordinarily; and there are people who never could see anything in the *New Eloise.* Are we not quits?

ESSAY XIII.

On Envy (A Dialogue).

H. I HAD a theory about Envy at one time, which I have partly given up of late—which was, that there was no such feeling, or that what is usually considered as envy or dislike of real merit is, more properly speaking, jealousy of false pretensions to it. I used to illustrate the argument by saying, that this was the reason we were not envious of the dead, because their merit was established beyond the reach of cavil or contradiction; whereas we are jealous and uneasy at sudden and upstart popularity, which wants the seal of time to confirm it, and which after all may turn out to be false and hollow. There is no danger that the testimony of ages should be reversed, and we add our suffrages to it with confidence, and even with enthusiasm. But we doubt reasonably enough, whether that which was applauded yesterday may not be condemned to-morrow; and are afraid of setting our name to a fraudulent claim to distinction. However satisfied we may be in our own minds, we are not sufficiently borne out by a general opinion and sympathy to prevent certain misgivings and scruples on the subject. No one thinks, for instance of denying the merit of Teniers in his particular style of art, and no one consequently thinks of envying him. The merit of Wilkie, on the contrary, was at first strongly contested, and there were other painters set up in opposition to him, till now that he has become a sort of *classic* in his way, he has ceased to be an object of envy or dislike, because no one doubts his real excellence, as far as it goes. He has no more than justice done him, and the mind never revolts at justice. It only rejects false or superficial claims to admiration, and is incensed to see the world take up with appearances, when they have no solid foundation to support them. We are not envious of Rubens or Raphael, because their fame is a pledge of their genius: but if any one were to bring forward the highest living names as equal to these, it immediately sets the blood in a ferment, and we try to stifle the sense we have of their merits, not because they are new or modern, but because we are not sure they will ever be old. Could we be certain that posterity would sanction our award, we should grant it without scruple, even to an enemy and a rival.

N. That which you describe is not envy. Envy is when you hate and would destroy all excellence that you do not yourself possess. So they say that Raphael, after he had copied the figures on one of the antique vases, endeavored to deface them; and Hoppner, it has been said, used to get pictures of Sir Joshua's into his possession, on purpose to paint them over and spoil them.

H. I do not believe the first, certainly. Raphael was too great a man, and with too fortunate a temper, to need or to wish to prop himself up on the ruins of others. As to Hoppner, he might perhaps think that there was no good reason for the preference given to Sir Joshua's portraits over his own, that his women of quality were the more airy and fashionable of the two, and might be tempted (once perhaps) in a fit of spleen, of caprice or impatience, to blot what was an eye-sore to himself from its old-fashioned, faded, dingy look, and at the same time dazzled others from the force of tradition and prejudice. Why, he might argue, should that old fellow run away with all the popularity even among those who (as he well knew) in their hearts preferred his own insipid, flaunting style to any other? Though it might be true that Sir Joshua was the greater painter, yet it was not true that Lords and Ladies thought so: he felt that he ought to be *their* favorite, and he might naturally hate what was continually *thrust in his dish*, and (as far as those about him were concerned) unjustly set over his head. Besides, Hoppner had very little of his own to rely on, and might wish, by destroying, to conceal the source from whence he had borrowed almost everything.

N. Did you never feel envy?

H. Very little, I think. In truth, I am out of the way of it: for the only pretension, of which I am tenacious, is that of being a metaphysician; and there is so little attention paid to this subject to pamper one's vanity, and so little fear of losing that little from competition, that there is scarcely any room for envy here.

One occupies the niche of eminence in which one places one's self, very quietly and contentedly! If I have ever felt this passion at all, it has been where some very paltry fellow has by trick and management contrived to obtain much more credit than he was entitled to. There was ———, to whom I had a perfect antipathy. He was the antithesis of a man of genius; and yet he did better, by mere dint of dullness, than many men of genius. This was intolerable. There was something in the man and in his manner, with which you could not possibly connect the idea of admiration, or of anything that was not merely mechanical—

"His look made the still air cold."

He repelled all sympathy and cordiality. What he did (though amounting only to mediocrity) was an insult on the understanding. It seemed that he should be able *to do nothing;* for he was nothing either in himself or in other people's idea of him! Mean actions or gross expressions too often unsettle one's theory of genius. We are unable as well as unwilling to connect the feeling of high intellect with low moral sentiment: the one is a kind of desecration of the other. I have for this reason been sometimes disposed to disparage Turner's fine landscapes, and be glad when he failed in his higher attempts, in order that my conception of the artist and his pictures might be more of a piece. This is not envy or an impatience of extraordinary merit, but an impatience of the incongruities in human nature, and of the drawbacks and stumbling-blocks in the way of our admiration of it. Who is there that admires the Author of Waverley more than I do? Who is there that despises Sir Walter Scott more? I do not like to think there should be a second instance of the same person's being

"The wisest, meanest of mankind—"

and should be heartily glad if the greatest genius of the age should turn out to be an honest man. The only thing that renders this *mis-alliance* between first-rate intellect and want of principle endurable is that such an extreme instance of it teaches us that great moral lesson of moderating our expectations of human perfection, and enlarging our indulgence for human infirmity

N. You start off with an idea as usual, and torture the plain state of the case into a paradox. There may be some truth in what you suppose; but malice or selfishness is at the bottom of the severity of your criticism, not the love of truth or justice, though you may make it the pretext. You are more angry at Sir Walter Scott's success than at his servility. You would give yourself no trouble about his poverty of spirit, if he had not made a hundred thousand pounds by his writings. The sting lies there, though you may try to conceal it from yourself.

H. I do not think so. I hate the sight of the Duke of Wellington for his foolish face, as much as for anything else. I cannot believe that a great general is contained under such a pasteboard vizor of a man. This, you'll say, is party spite, and rage at his good-fortune. I deny it. I always liked Lord Castlereagh for the gallant spirit that shone through his appearance; and his fine bust surmounted and crushed fifty orders that glittered beneath it. Nature seemed to have meant him for something better than he was. But in the other instance, Fortune has evidently played Nature a trick,

"To throw a cruel sunshine on a fool."

N. The truth is, you were reconciled to Lord Castlereagh's face, and patronized his person, because you felt a sort of advantage over him in point of style. His blunders qualified his success; and you fancied you could take his speeches in pieces, whereas you could not undo the battles the other had won.

H. So I have been accused of denying the merits of Pitt, from political dislike and prejudice: but who is there that has praised Burke more than I have? It is a subject I am never weary of, because I feel it.

N. You mean, because he is dead, and is now little talked of; and you think you show superior discernment and liberality by praising him. If there was a *Burke-Club*, you would say nothing about him. You deceive yourself as to your own motives, and weave a wrong theory out of them for human nature. The love of distinction is the ruling passion of the human mind; we grudge whatever draws off attention from ourselves to others; and all our actions are but different contrivances, either by sheer malice or affected liberality, to keep it to ourselves or share it with others. Goldsmith was jealous even of beauty in the other sex. When the people of Amsterdam gathered round the balcony to look at the Miss Hornecks, he grew impatient, and said peevishly, "There are places where I also am admired." It may be said—What could their beauty have to do with his reputation? No: it could not tend to lessen it, but it drew admiration from himself to them. So Mr. Croker, the other day, when he was at the Academy dinner, made himself conspicuous by displaying the same feeling. He found fault with everything, *damned* all the pictures—landscapes, portraits, busts, nothing pleased him; and not contented with this, he then fell foul of the art itself, which he treated as a piece of idle foolery, and said that Raphael had thrown away his time in doing what was not worth the trouble. This, besides being insincere, was a great breach of good-manners, which none but a low-bred man would be guilty of; but he felt his own consequence annoyed; he saw a splendid exhibition of art, a splendid dinner set out, the Nobility, the Cabinet-Ministers, the branches of the Royal Family invited to it; the most eminent professors were there present; it was a triumph and a celebration of art; a dazzling proof of the height to which it had attained in this country, and of the esteem in which it was held. He felt that he played a very subordinate part in all this; and in order to relieve his own wounded vanity, he was determined (as he thought) to mortify that of others. He wanted to make himself of more importance than anybody else, by trampling on Raphael and on the art itself. It was ridiculous and disgusting, because every one saw through the motive; so that he defeated his own object.

H. And he would have avoided this exposure, if with all his conceit and ill-humor, he had had the smallest taste for the art, or perception of the beauties of Raphael. He has just knowledge enough of drawing to make a whole-length sketch of Bonaparte, verging on caricature, yet not palpably outraging probability; so that it looked like a fat, stupid, *common-place* man, or a flattering likeness of some legitimate monarch—he had skill, cunning, servility enough to do this with his own hand, and to circulate a print of it with zealous activity, as an indirect means of degrading him in appearance to that low level to which fortune had once raised him in reality. But the man who could do this deliberately, and with satisfaction to his own nature, was not the man to understand Raphael, and might slander him or any other, the greatest of earth's born, without injuring or belying any feeling of admiration or excellence in his own breast; for no such feeling had ever entered there.

N. Come, this is always the way. Now you are growing personal. Why do you so constantly let your temper get the better of your reason?

H. Because I hate a hypocrite, a time-server, and a slave. But to return to the question, and say no more about this "*talking potatoe*"*—I do not think that, except in circumstances of peculiar aggravation, or of extraordinary ill-temper and moroseness of disposition, any one who has a thorough feeling of excellence has a delight in gainsaying it. The excellence that we feel, we participate in as if it were our own—it becomes ours by transfusion of mind—it is instilled into our hearts—it mingles with our blood. We are unwilling to allow merit, because we are unable to perceive it. But to be convinced of it, is to be ready to acknowledge and pay homage to it. Illiberality or narrowness of feeling is a narrowness of aste, a want of proper *tact*. A bigoted and exclusive spirit is real blindness to all excellence but our own, or that of some particular school or sect. I think I can give an instance of this in some friends of mine, on whom you will be disposed to have no more mercy than I have on Mr. Croker—I mean the *Lake School.* Their system of Ostracism is not unnatural: it begins only with the natural limits of their tastes and feelings. Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Coleridge, and Mr. Southey have no feeling for the excellence of Pope, or Goldsmith, or Gray—they do not enter at all into their merits, and on that account it is that they deny, proscribe, and envy them. *Incredulus odi,* is the explanation here, and in all such cases. I am satisfied that the fine turn of thought in Pope, the gliding verse of Goldsmith, the brilliant diction of Gray have no charms for the Author of the Lyrical Ballads: he has no faculty in his mind to which these qualities of poetry address themselves. It is not an oppressive, galling sense of them, and a burning envy to rival them, and shame that he cannot—he would not, if he could. He has no more ambition to write couplets like Pope, than to turn a barrel-organ. He has no pleasure in such poetry, and therefore he has no patience with others that have. The enthusiasm that they feel and express on the subject seems an effect without a cause, and puzzles and provokes the mind accordingly. Mr. Wordsworth, in particular, is narrower in his tastes than other people, because he sees everything from a single and original point of view. Whatever does not fall in strictly with this, he accounts no better than a play or a delusion, or a play upon words.

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* Mr. Croker made his first appearance in this country as a hack-writer, and received this surname from the classic lips of Mr. Cumberland.

N. You mistake the matter altogether. The acting principle in their minds is an inveterate selfishness or desire of distinction. They see that a particular kind of excellence has been carried to its height—a height that they have no hope of arriving at—the road is stopped up; they must therefore strike into a different path; and in order to divert the public mind and draw attention to themselves, they affect to decry the old models, and overturn what they cannot rival. They know they cannot write like Pope or Dryden, or would be only imitators if they did; and they consequently strive to gain an original and equal celebrity by singularity and affectation. Their simplicity is not natural to them: it is the *forlorn-hope* of impotent and disappointed vanity.

H. I cannot think that. It may be so in part, but not principally or altogether. Their minds are cast in a peculiar mould, and they cannot produce or receive any other impressions than those which they do. They are, as to matters of taste, *très bornés.*

N. You make them out stupider than I thought. I have sometimes spoken disrespectfully of their talents, and so I think, comparatively with those of some of our standard writers. But I certainly should never conceive them so lost to common sense, as not to perceive the beauty, or splendor, or strength of Pope and Dryden. They are dazzled by it, and wilfully shut their eyes to it, and try to throw dust in those of other people. We easily discern and are confounded by excellence, which we are conscious we should in vain attempt to equal. We may see that another is taller than ourselves, and yet we may know that we can never grow to his stature. A dwarf may easily envy a giant.

H. They would like the comparison to Polyphemus in "Acis and Galatea" better. They think that little men have run away with the prize of beauty.

N. No one admires poetry more than I do, or sees more beauties in it; though if I were to try a thousand years, I should never be able to do anything to please myself.

H. Perhaps not in the mechanical part; but still you admire and are most struck with those passages in poetry, that accord with the previous train of your own feelings, and give you back the images of your own mind. There is something congenial in taste, at least, between ourselves and those we admire. I do not think there is any point of sympathy between Pope and the *Lake School:* on the contrary, I know there is an antipathy between them. When you speak of Titian, you look like him. I can understand how it is that you talk so well on that subject, and that your discourse has an extreme unction about it, a marrowiness like his coloring. But I do not believe that the late Mr. West had the least notion of Titian's peculiar excellences—he would think one of his own copies of him as good as the original, and his own historical compositions much better. He would therefore, I conceive, sit and listen to a conversation in praise of him with something like impatience, and think it an interruption to more important discussions on the principles of high art. But if Mr. West had ever seen in nature what there is to be found in Titian's copies from it, he would never have thought of such a comparison, and would have bowed his head in deep humility at the very mention of his name. He might not have been able to do like him, and yet might have seen nature with the same eyes.

N. We do not always admire most what we can do best; but often the contrary. Sir Joshua's admiration of Michael Angelo was perfectly sincere and unaffected; but yet nothing could be more diametrically opposite than the minds of the two men—there was an absolute gulf between them. It was the consciousness of his own inability to execute such works, that made him more sensible of the difficulty and the merit. It was the same with his fondness for Poussin. He was always exceedingly angry with me for not admiring him enough. But this showed his good sense and modesty. Sir Joshua was always on the *look-out* for whatever might enlarge his notions on the subject of his art, and supply his defects; and did not, like some artists, measure all possible excellence by his own actual deficiencies. He thus improved and learned something daily. Others have lost their way by setting out with a pragmatical notion of their own self-sufficiency, and have never advanced a single step beyond their first crude conceptions. Fuseli was to blame in this respect. He did not want capacity or enthusiasm, but he had an overweening opinion of his own peculiar acquirements. Speaking of Vandyke, he said he would not go across the way to see the finest portrait he had ever painted. He asked—"What is it but a little bit of color?" Sir Joshua said, on hearing this—"Aye, he'll live to repent it." And he has lived to repent it. With that little bit added to his own heap, he would have been a much greater painter, and a happier man.

H. Yes: but I doubt whether he could have added it in practice. I think the indifference, in the first instance, arises from the want of taste and capacity. If Fuseli had possessed an eye for color, he would not have despised it in Vandyke. But we reduce others to the limits of our own capacity. We think little of what we cannot do, and envy it where we imagine that it meets with disproportioned admiration from others. A dull, pompous and obscure writer has been heard to exclaim, "That *dunce*, Wordsworth!" This was excusable in one who is utterly without feeling for any objects in nature, but those which would make splendid furniture for a drawing-room, or any sentiment of the human heart, but that with which a slave looks up to a despot, or a despot looks down upon a slave. This contemptuous expression was an effusion of spleen and impatience at the idea tha there should be any one who preferred Wordsworth's descriptions of a daisy or a linnet's nest to his *auctioneer*-poetry about curtains, and palls, and sceptres, and precious stones: but had Wordsworth, in addition to his original sin of simplicity and true genius, been a popular writer, his contempt would have turned into hatred As it is, he tolerates his *idle nonsense:* there is a link of friendship in mutual political servility; and besides, he has a fellow feeling with him, as one of those writers of whose merits the world have not been fully sensible. Mr. Croly set out with high pretensions, and had some idea of rivalling Lord Byron in a certain lofty, imposing style of versification: but he is probably by this time convinced that mere constitutional *hauteur* as ill supplies the place of elevation of genius, as of the pride of birth; and that the public know how to distinguish between a string of gaudy, painted, turgid phrases, and the vivid creations of fancy, or touching delineations of the human heart.

N. What did you say the writer's name was?

H. Croly. He is one of the Royal Society of Authors.

N. I never heard of him. Is he an imitator of Lord Byron, did you say?

H. I am afraid neither he nor Lord Byron would have it thought so.

N. Such imitators do all the mischief, and bring real genius into disrepute. This is in some measure an excuse for those who have endeavored to disparage Pope and Dryden. We have had a surfeit of imitations of them. Poetry, in the hands of a set of mechanic scribblers, had become such a tame, mawkish thing, that we could endure it no longer, and our impatience of the abuse of a good thing transferred itself to the original source. It was this which enabled Wordsworth and the rest to raise up a new school (or to attempt it) on the ruins of Pope; because a race of writers had succeeded him without one particle of his wit, sense and delicacy, and the world were tired of their everlasting *sing-song* and *namby-pamby*. People were disgusted at hearing the faults of Pope (the part most easily imitated) cried up as his greatest excellence, and were willing to take refuge from such nauseous cant in any novelty.

H. What you now observe comes nearly to my account of the matter. Sir Andrew Wylie will sicken people of the Author of Waverley. It was but the other day that some one was proposing that there should be a Society formed for not reading the Scotch Novels. But it is not the excellence of that fine writer that we are tired of, or revolt at, but vapid imitations or catch-penny repetitions of himself. Even the quantity of them has an obvious tendency to lead to this effect. It lessens, instead of increasing our admiration: for it seems to be an evidence that there is no difficulty in the task, and leads us to suspect something like trick or deception in their production. We have not been used to look upon works of genius as of the *fungus* tribe. Yet these are so. We had rather doubt our own taste than ascribe such a superiority of genius to another, that it works without consciousness or effort, executes the labor of a life in a few weeks, writes faster than the public can read, and scatters the rich materials of thought and feeling like so much chaff.

N. Aye, there it is. We had rather do anything than acknowledge the merit of another, if we have any possible excuse or evasion to help it. Depend upon it, you are glad Sir Walter Scott is a Tory—because it gives you an opportunity of qualifying your involuntary admiration of him. You would be sorry indeed if he were what you call an *honest man!* Envy is like a viper coiled up at the bottom of the heart, ready to spring upon and poison whatever approaches it. We live upon the vices, the imperfections, the misfortunes, and disappointments of others, as our natural food. We cannot bear a superior or an equal. Even our pretended cordial admiration is only a subterfuge of our vanity. By raising one, we proportionably lower and mortify others. Our self-love may perhaps be taken by surprise and thrown off its guard by novelty; but it soon recovers itself, and begins to cool in its warmest expressions, and finds every possible fault. Ridicule, for this reason, is sure to prevail over truth, because the malice of mankind thrown into the scale gives the casting-weight. We have one succession of authors, of painters, of favorites, after another, whom we hail in their turns, because they operate as a diversion to one another, and relieve us of the galling sense of the superiority of any one individual for any length of time. By changing the object of our admiration, we secretly persuade ourselves that there is no such thing as excellence. It is that which we hate above all things. It is the worm that gnaws us, that never dies. The mob shout when a king or a conqueror appears: they would take him and tear him in pieces, but that he is the scape-goat of their pride and vanity, and makes all other men appear like a herd of slaves and cowards. Instead of a thousand equals, we compound for one superior, and allay all heart-burnings and animosities among ourselves, by giving the palm to *the least worthy*. This is the secret of monarchy. Loyalty is not the love of kings, but hatred and jealousy of mankind. A lacquey rides behind his lord's coach, and feels no envy of his master. Why ? because he looks down and laughs, in his borrowed finery, at the ragged rabble below. Is it not so in our profession ? What Academician eats his dinner in peace, if a rival sits near him ; if his own are not the most admired pictures in the room ; or, in that case, if there are any others that are at all admired, and divide distinction with him ? Is not every artifice used to place the pictures of other artists in the worst light ? Do they not go there after their performances are hung up, and try to *paint one another out ?* What is the case among players ? Does not a favorite actor threaten to leave the stage, as soon as a new candidate for public favor is taken the least notice of ? Would not a Manager of a theatre (who has himself pretensions) sooner see it burnt down, than that it should be saved from ruin and lifted into the full tide of public prosperity and favor, by the efforts of one whom he conceives to have supplanted himself in the popular opinion ? Do we not see an author, who has had a tragedy damned, sit at the play every night of a new performance for years after, in the hopes of gaining a new companion in defeat ? Is it not an indelible offence to a picture-collector and patron of the arts, to hint that another has a fine head in his collection ? Will any merchant in the city allow another to be worth a *plum ?* What wit will applaud a *bon mot* by a rival ? He sits uneasy and out of countenance, till he has made another, which he thinks will make the company forget the first. Do women ever allow beauty in others ? Observe the people in a country-town, and see how they look at those who are better dressed than themselves ; listen to the talk in country-places, and mind if it is composed of anything but slanders, gossip, and lies.

H. But don't you yourself admire Sir Joshua Reynolds ?

N. Why, yes : I think I have no envy myself, and yet I have sometimes caught myself at it. I don't know that I do not admire Sir Joshua merely as a screen against the reputation of bad pictures.

H. Then, at any rate, what I say is true: we envy the good less than we do the bad.

N. I do not think so; and am not sure that Sir Joshua did himself not admire Michael Angelo to get rid of the superiority of Titian, Rubens, and Rembrandt, which pressed closer on him, and "galled his kibe more."

H. I should not think that at all unlikely; for I look upon Sir Joshua as rather a spiteful man, and always thought he could have little real feeling for the works of Michael Angelo or Raphael, which he extolled so highly, or he would not have been insensible to their effect the first time he ever beheld them.

N. He liked Sir Peter Lely better.

ESSAY XIV.

On the difference between Writing and Speaking.

"Some minds are proportioned to that which may be despatched at once, or within a short return of time: others to that which begins afar off, and is to be won with length of pursuit." LORD BACON.

IT is a common observation, that few persons can be found who speak and write equally well. Not only is it obvious that the two faculties do not always go together in the same proportions: but they are not usually in direct opposition to each other. We find that the greatest authors often make the worst company in the world; and again, some of the liveliest fellows imaginable in conversation, or extempore speaking, seem to lose all their vivacity and spirit the moment they set pen to paper. For this a greater degree of quickness or slowness of parts, education, habit, temper, turn of mind, and a variety of collateral and predisposing causes, are necessary to account. The subject is at least curious, and worthy of an attempt to explain it. I shall endeavor to illustrate the difference by familiar examples rather than by analytical reasonings. The philosopher of old was not unwise, who defined motion by getting up and walking.

The great leading distinction between writing and speaking is, that more time is allowed for the one than the other: and hence different faculties are required for, and different objects attained by, each. He is properly the best speaker who can collect together the greatest number of apposite ideas at a moment's warning: he is properly the best writer who can give utterance to the greatest quantity of valuable knowledge in the course of his whole life. The chief requisite for the one, then, appears to be quickness and facility of perception—for the other, patience of soul, and a power increasing with the difficulties it has to master. He cannot be denied to be an expert speaker, a lively companion, who is never at a loss for something to say on every occasion or subject that offers: he, by the same rule, will make a respectable writer, who, by dint of study, can find out anything good to say upon any one point that has not been touched upon before, or who, by asking for time, can give the most complete and comprehensive view of any question. The one must be done off-hand, at a single blow: the other can only be done by a repetition of blows, by having time to think and do better. In speaking, less is required of you, if you only do it at once, with grace and spirit: in writing, you stipulate for all that you are capable of, but you have the choice of your own time and subject. You do not expect from the manufacturer the same dispatch in executing an order that you do from the shopkeeper or warehouseman. The difference of *quicker* and *slower*, however, is not all: that is merely a difference of comparison in doing the same thing. But the writer and speaker have to do things essentially different. Besides habit, and greater or less facility, there is also a certain reach of capacity, a certain depth or shallowness, grossness or refinement of intellect, which marks out the distinction between those whose chief ambition is to shine by producing an immediate effect, or who are thrown back, by a natural bias, on the severer researches of thought and study.

We see persons of that standard or texture of mind that they can do nothing, but on the spur of the occasion: if they have time to deliberate, they are lost. There are others who have no resource, who cannot advance a step by any efforts or assistance, beyond a successful arrangement of common-places: but these they have always at command, at everybody's service. There is F——; meet him where you will in the street, he has his topic ready to discharge in the same breath with the customary forms of salutation; he is hand and glove with it; on it goes and off, and he manages it like Wart his caliver.

Hear him but reason in divinity,
And, all-admiring, with an inward wish
You would desire that he were made a prelate.
Let him but talk of any state-affair,
You'd say it had been all in all his study.
Turn him to any cause of policy,

> The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
> Familiar as his garter. When he speaks,
> The air, a charter'd libertine, stands still—

but, ere you have time to answer him, he is off like a shot, to repeat the same rounded, fluent observations to others:—a perfect master of the sentences, a walking polemic wound up for the day, a smartly bound political pocket-book! Set the same person to write a common paragraph, and he cannot get through it for very weariness: ask him a question, ever so little out of the common road, and he stares you in the face. What does all this bustle, animation, plausibility, and command of words amount to? A lively flow of animal spirits, a good deal of confidence, a communicative turn, and a tolerably tenacious memory with respect to floating opinions and current phrases. Beyond the routine of the daily newspapers and coffee-house criticism, such persons do not venture to think at all: or if they did, it would be so much the worse for them, for they would only be perplexed in the attempt, and would perform their part in the mechanism of society with so much the less alacrity and easy volubility.

The most dashing orator I ever heard is the flattest writer I ever read. In speaking, he was like a volcano vomiting out *lava;* in writing, he is like a volcano burnt out. Nothing but the dry cinders, the hard shell remains. The tongues of flame, with which, in haranguing a mixed assembly, he used to illuminate his subject, and almost scorched up the panting air, do not appear painted on the margin of his works. He was the model of a flashy, powerful demagogue—a madman blest with a fit audience. He was possessed, infuriated with the patriotic *mania;* he seemed to rend and tear the rotten carcase of corruption with the remorseless, indecent rage of a wild beast: he mourned over the bleeding body of his country, like another Antony over the dead body of Cæsar, as if he would "move the very stones of Rome to rise and mutiny:" he pointed to the "Persian abodes, the glittering temples" of oppression and luxury, with prophetic exultation; and, like another Helen, had almost fired another Troy! The lightning of national indignation flashed from his eye; the workings of the popular mind were seen laboring in his bosom: it writhed and swelled with its rank "fraught of aspics' tongues," and the poison frothed over at his lips. Thus qualified, he "wielded at will the fierce democracy, and fulmin'd over" an area of souls, of no mean circumference. He who might be said to have "roared you in the ears of the groundlings an 'twere any lion, aggravates his voice" on paper, "like any sucking-dove." It is not merely that the same individual cannot sit down quietly in his closet, and produce the same, or a correspondent effect—that what he delivers over to the compositor is tame, and trite, and tedious—that he cannot by any means, as it were, "create a soul under the ribs of death"—but sit down yourself, and read one of these very popular and electrical effusions (for they have been published) and you would not believe it to be the same! The thunder-and-lightning mixture of the orator turns out a mere drab-colored suit in the person of the prose-writer. We wonder at the change, and think there must be some mistake, some leger-de-main trick played off upon us, by which what before appeared so fine now appears to be so worthless. The deception took place *before;* now it is removed. "Bottom! thou art translated!" might be placed as a motto under most collections of printed speeches that I have had the good fortune to meet with, whether originally addressed to the people, the senate, or the bar. Burke's and Windham's form an exception: Mr. Coleridge's *Conciones ad Populum* do not, any more than Mr. Thelwall's *Tribune.* What we read is the same: what we hear and see is different—"the self-same words, but *not* to the self-same tune." The orator's vehemence of gesture, the loudness of the voice, the speaking eye, the conscious attitude, the inexplicable dumb show and noise,—all "those brave sublunary things that made his raptures clear,"—are no longer there, and without these he is nothing;—his "fire and air" turn to puddle and ditch-water, and the God of eloquence and of our idolatry sinks into a common mortal, or an image of lead, with a few labels, nicknames, and party watchwords stuck in his mouth. The truth is, that these always made up the stock of his intellectual wealth; but a certain exaggeration and extravagance of *manner* covered the nakedness, and swelled out the emptiness of the *matter:* the sympathy of angry multitudes with an impassioned theatrical declaimer supplied the place of argument or wit; while the physical animation and ardor of the speaker evaporated in "sound and fury, signifying nothing," and leaving no trace behind it. A popular speaker (such as I have been here describing) is like a vulgar actor off the stage—take away his cue, and he has nothing to say for himself. Or he is so accustomed to the intoxication of popular applause, that without that stimulus he has no motive or power of exertion left—neither imagination, understanding, liveliness, common sense, words nor ideas—he is fairly cleared out; and in the intervals of sober reason, is the dullest and most imbecile of all mortals.

An orator can hardly get beyond *common-places:* if he does, he gets beyond his hearers. The most successful speakers, even in the House of Commons, have not been the best scholars or the finest writers—neither those who took the most profound views of their subject, nor who adorned it with the most original fancy, or the richest combinations of language. Those speeches that in general told best at the time, are not now readable. What were the materials of which they were chiefly composed? An imposing detail of passing events, a formal display of official documents, an appeal to established maxims, an echo of popular clamor, some worn-out metaphor newly vamped-up,—some hackneyed argument used for the hundredth, nay thousandth time, to fall in with the interests, the passions, or prejudices of listening and devoted admirers;—some truth or falsehood, repeated as the Shibboleth of party time out of mind, which gathers strength from sympathy as it spreads, because it is understood or assented to by the million, and finds, in the increased action of the minds of numbers, the weight and force of an instinct. A COMMON-PLACE does not leave the mind "sceptical, puzzled, and undecided in the moment of action:"—"it gives a body to opinion, and a permanence to fugitive belief." It operates mechanically, and open an instantaneous and infallible communication between the hearer and speaker. A set of cant phrases, arranged in sounding sentences, and pronounced "with good emphasis and discretion," keep the gross and irritable humors of an audience in constant fermentation; and levy no tax on the understanding. To give a reason for anything is to breed a doubt of it, which doubt you may not remove in the sequel; either because your reason may not be a good one, or because the person to whom it is addressed may not be able to comprehend it, or because *others* may not be able to comprehend it. He who offers to go into the grounds of an acknowledged axiom, risks the unanimity of the company "by most admired disorder," as he who digs to the foundation of a building to show its solidity, risks its falling. But a common-place is enshrined in its own unquestioned evidence, and constitutes its own immortal basis. Nature, it has been said, abhors a *vacuum:* and the House of Commons, it might be said, hates everything but a common-place!—Mr. Burke did not often shock the prejudices of the House: he endeavored to *account for them*, to "lay the flattering unction" of philosophy "to their souls." They could not endure him. Yet he did not attempt this by dry argument alone; he called to his aid the flowers of poetical fiction, and strewed the most dazzling colors of language over the Standing Orders of the House. It was a double offence to them —an aggravation of the encroachments of his genius. They would rather "hear a cat mew or an axle-tree grate," than hear a man talk philosophy by the hour—

> Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute,
> And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
> Where no crude surfeit reigns.

He was emphatically called the *Dinner-Bell.* They went out by shoals when he began to speak. They coughed and shuffled him down. While he was uttering some of the finest observations (to speak in compass) that ever were delivered in that House, they walked out, not as the beasts came out of the ark, by twos and by threes, but in droves and companies of tens, of dozens, and scores! Oh! it is "the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man," when you are in the middle of a delicate speculation to see "a robustious, periwig-pated fellow" deliberately take up his hat and walk out. But what effect could Burke's finest observations be expected to have on the House of Commons in their corporate capacity? On the supposition that they were original, refined, comprehensive, his auditors had never heard, and assuredly they had never thought of them before: how then should they know that they were good or bad, till they had time to consider better of it, or till they were told what to think? In the mean time, their effect would be to stop the question: they were blanks in the debate: they could at best only be laid aside and left *ad referendum.* What would it signify if four or five persons, at the utmost, felt their full force and fascinating power the instant they were delivered? They would be utterly unintelligible to nine-tenths of the persons present, and their impression upon any particular individual, more knowing than the rest, would be involuntarily paralysed by the torpedo touch of the elbow of a country gentleman or city-orator. There is a reaction in insensibility as well as in enthusiasm; and men in society judge not by their own convictions, but by sympathy with others. In reading, we may go over the page again, whenever anything new or questionable "gives us pause:" besides, we are by ourselves, and it is *a word to the wise.* We are not afraid of understanding too much, and being called upon to unriddle. In hearing we are (saving the mark!) in the company of fools; and time presses. Was the debate to be suspended while Mr. Fox or Mr. Windham took this or that Honorable Member aside, to explain to them *that fine observation* of Mr. Burke's, and to watch over the new birth of their understandings, the dawn of this new light! If we were to wait till Noble Lords and Honorable Gentlemen were inspired with a relish for abstruse thinking, and a taste for the loftier flights of fancy, the business of this great nation would shortly be at a stand. No: it is too much to ask that our good things should be duly appreciated by the first person we meet, or in the next minute after their disclosure; if the world are a little, a very little, the wiser or better for them a century hence, it is full as much as can be modestly expected!—The impression of anything delivered in a large assembly must be comparatively null and void, unless you not only understand and feel its value yourself, but are conscious that it is felt and understood by the meanest capacity present. Till that is the case, the speaker is in your power, not you in his. The eloquence that is effectual and irresistible must stir the inert mass of prejudice, and pierce the opaquest shadows of ignorance. Corporate bodies move slow in the progress of intellect for this reason, that they must keep back, like convoys, for the heaviest sailing vessels under their charge. The sinews of the wisest councils are, after all, impudence and interest: the most enlightened bodies are often but slaves of the weakest intellects they reckon among them, and the best-intentioned are but tools of the greatest hypocrites and knaves.—To conclude what I had to say on the character of Mr. Burke's parliamentary style, I will just give an instance of what I mean in affirming that it was too recondite for his hearers; and it shall be even in so obvious a thing as a quotation. Speaking of the new fangled French Constitution, and in particular of the King (Louis XVI.) as the chief power in form and appearance only, he repeated the famous lines in Milton describing Death, and concluded with peculiar emphasis,

> —— What *seem'd* its head,
> The *likeness* of a kingly crown had on.

The person who heard him make the speech said, that, if ever a poet's language had been finely applied by an orator to express his thoughts and make out his purpose, it was in this instance. The passage, I believe, is not in his reported speeches; and I should think, in all likelihood, it "fell still-born" from his lips; while one of Mr. Canning's well-thumbed quotations out of Virgil would electrify the Treasury Benches, and be echoed by all the politicians of his own standing, and the tyros of his own school, from Lord Liverpool in the Upper down to Mr. William Ward in the Lower House.

Mr. Burke was an author before he was a Member of Parliament: he ascended to that practical eminence from "the platform" of his literary pursuits. He walked out of his study into the House. But he never became a thorough-bred debater. He was not "native to that element," nor was he ever "subdued to the quality" of that motley crew of knights, citizens, and burgesses. The late Lord Chatham was made for, and by it. He seemed to vault into his seat there, like Hotspur, with the exclamation in his mouth—"that Roan shall be my throne." Or he sprang out of the genius of the House of Commons, like Pallas from the head of Jupiter, completely armed. He assumed an ascendency there from the very port and stature of his mind—

from his aspiring and fiery temperament. He vanquished, because he could not yield. He controlled the purposes of others, because he was strong in his own obdurate self-will. He convinced his followers, by never doubting himself. He did not argue, but assert; he took what he chose for granted, instead of making a question of it. He was not a dealer in *moot-points*. He seized on some strong-hold in the argument, and held it fast with a convulsive grasp—or wrested the weapons out of his adversaries' hands by main force. He entered the lists like a gladiator. He made political controversy a combat of personal skill and courage. He was not for wasting time in long-winded discussions with his opponents, but tried to disarm them by a word, by a glance of his eye, so that they should not dare to contradict or confront him again. He did not wheedle, or palliate, or circumvent, or make a studied appeal to the reason or the passions—he *dictated* his opinions to the House of Commons. "He spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."—But if he did not produce such an effect either by reason or imagination, how did he produce it? The principle by which he exerted his influence over others (and it is a principle of which some speakers that I might mention seem not to have an idea, even in possibility) was sympathy. He himself evidently had a strong possession of his subject, a thorough conviction, an intense interest; and this communicated itself from his *manner*, from the tones of his voice, from his commanding attitudes, and eager gestures, instinctively and unavoidably to his hearers. His will was surcharged with electrical matter like a Voltaic battery; and all who stood within its reach felt the full force of the shock. Zeal will do more than knowledge. To say the truth, there is little knowledge,—no ingenuity, no parade of individual details, not much attempt at general argument, neither wit nor fancy in his speeches—but there are a few plain truths told home: whatever he says, he does not mince the matter, but clenches it in the most unequivocal manner, and with the fullest sense of its importance, in clear, short, pithy, old English sentences. The most obvious things, as he puts them, read like axioms—so that he appears, as it were, the genius of common sense personified; and in turning to his speeches you fancy that you have met with (at least) one honest statesman !—Lord Chatham commenced his career in the intrigues of a camp and the bustle of a mess-room; where he probably learnt that the way to govern others, is to make your will your warrant, and your word a law. If he had spent the early part of his life, like Mr. Burke, in writing a treatise on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, and in dreaming over the abstract nature and causes of things, he would never have taken the lead he did in the British Senate.

Both Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt (though as opposite to each other as possible) were essentially speakers, not authors, in their mode of oratory. Beyond the moment, beyond the occasion, beyond the immediate power shown, astonishing as that was, there was little remarkable or worth preserving in their speeches. There is no thought in them that implies a habit of deep and refined reflection (more than we are accustomed ordinarily to find in people of education); there is no knowledge that does not lie within the reach of obvious and mechanical search; and as to the powers of language, the chief miracle is, that a source of words so apt, forcible, and well-arranged, so copious and unfailing, should have been found constantly open to express their ideas without any previous preparation. Considered as written style, they are not far out of the common course of things; and perhaps it is assuming too much, and making the wonder greater than it is, with a very natural love of indulging our admiration of extraordinary persons, when we conceive that parliamentary speeches are in general delivered without any previous preparation. They do not, it is true, allow of preparation at the moment, but they have the preparation of the preceding night, and of the night before that, and of nights, weeks, months, and years of the same endless drudgery and routine, in going over the same subjects, argued (with some paltry difference) on the same grounds. *Practice makes perfect.* He who has got a speech by heart on any particular occasion, cannot be much gravelled for lack of matter on any similar occasion in future. Not only are the topics the same; the very same phrases—whole batches of them,—are served up as the Order of the Day; the same parliamentary bead-roll of grave impertinence is twanged off, in full cadence, by the Honorable Member or his Learned and Honorable Friend; and the well-known, voluminous, calculable periods roll over the drowsy ears of the auditors, almost before they are delivered from the vapid tongue that utters them! It may appear, at first sight, that here are a number of persons got together, picked out from the whole nation, who can speak at all times upon all subjects in the most exemplary manner; but the fact is, they only repeat the same things over and over on the same subjects,—and they obtain credit for general capacity and ready wit, like Chaucer's Monk, who, by having three words of Latin always in his mouth, passed for a great scholar.

> A few termes coude he, two or three,
> That he had learned out of som decree;
> No wonder is, he herd it all the day.

Try them on any other subject *out of doors*, and see how soon the extempore wit and wisdom "will halt for it." See how few of those who have distinguished themselves *in* the House of Commons have done anything *out of it;* how few that have, shine *there!* Read over the collections of old Debates, twenty, forty, eighty, a hundred years ago; they are the same, *mutatis mutandis*, as those of yesterday. You wonder to see how little has been added; you grieve that so little has been lost. Even in their own favorite topics, how much are they to seek! They still talk gravely of the Sinking Fund in St. Stephen's Chapel, which has been for some time exploded as a juggle by Mr. Place of Charing-Cross; and a few of the principles of Adam Smith, which every one else had been acquainted with long since, are just now beginning to dawn on the collective understanding of the two Houses of Parliament. Instead of an exuberance of sumptuous matter, you have the same meagre standing dishes for every day in the year. You must serve an apprenticeship to a want of originality, to a suspension of thought and feeling. You are in a go-cart of prejudices, in a regularly constructed machine of pretexts and precedents; you are not only to wear the livery of other men's thoughts, but there is a House-of-Commons jargon which must be used for everything. A man of simplicity and independence of mind cannot easily reconcile himself to all this formality and mummery; yet wo to him that shall attempt to discard it! You can no more move against the stream of custom, than you can make head against a crowd of people; the mob of lords and gentlemen will not let you speak or think but as they do. You are hemmed in, stifled, pinioned, pressed to death,—and if you make one false step, are "trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude!" Talk of mobs! Is there any body of people that has this character in a more consummate degree than the House of Commons? Is there any set of men that determines more by acclamation, and less by deliberation and individual conviction? That is moved more *en masse*, in its aggregate capacity, as brute force and physical number? That judges with more Midas ears, blind and sordid, without discrimination of right and wrong? The greatest test of courage I can conceive, is to speak truth in the House of Commons. I have heard Sir Francis Burdett say things there which I could not enough admire; and which he could not have ventured upon saying, if, besides his honesty, he had not been a man of fortune, of family, of character,—aye, and a very good-looking man into the bargain! Dr. Johnson had a wish to try his hand in the House of Commons. An elephant might as well have been introduced there, in all the forms: Sir William Curtis makes a better figure. Either he or the Speaker (Onslow) must have resigned. The orbit of his intellect was not the one in which the intellect of the house moved by ancient privilege. *His* common-places were not *their* common-places.—Even Horne Tooke failed, with all his *tact*, his self-possession, his ready talent, and his long practice at the hustings. He had weapons of his own, with which he wished to make play, and did not lay his hand upon the established levers for wielding the House of Commons. A succession of dry, sharp-pointed sayings, which come in excellently well in the pauses or quick turns of conversation, do not make a speech. A series of drops is not a stream. Besides, he had been in the practice of rallying his guests and tampering with his subject; and this ironical tone did not suit his new situation. He had been used to "give his own little Senate laws," and when he found the resistance of the great one more than he could manage, he shrank back from the attempt, disheartened and powerless. It is nothing that a man can talk (the better, the worse it is for him) unless he can talk in trammels; he must be drilled into the regiment; he must not run out of the course! The worst thing a man can do is to set up for a wit there—or rather (I would say) for a humorist—to say odd out-of-the-way things, to ape a character, to play the clown or the wag in the House. This is the very forlorn hope of a parliamentary ambition. They may tolerate it till they know what you are at, but no longer. It may succeed once or twice, but the third time you will be sure to break your neck. They know nothing of you, or your whims, nor have they time to look at a puppet-show. "They look only at the stop-watch, my Lord!" We have seen a very lively sally of this sort which failed lately. The House of Commons is the last place where a man will draw admiration by making a jest of his own character. But if he has a mind to make a jest of humanity, of liberty, and of common sense and decency, he will succeed well enough!

The only person who ever "hit the House between wind and water" in this way,—who made sport for the Members, and kept his own dignity (in our time at least), was Mr. Windham. He carried on the traffic in parliamentary conundrums and enigmas with great *éclat* for more than one season. He mixed up a vein of characteristic eccentricity with a succession of far-fetched and curious speculations, very pleasantly. Extremes meet; and Mr. Windham overcame the obstinate attachment of his hearers to fixed opinions by the force of paradoxes. He startled his bed-rid audience effectually. A paradox was a treat to them, on the score of novelty at least; "the sight of one," according to the Scotch proverb, "was good for sore eyes." So Mr. Windham humored them in the thing for once. He took all sorts of commonly received doctrines and notions (with an understood reserve)—reversed them, and set up a fanciful theory of his own, instead. The changes were like those of a pantomime. Ask the first old woman you met her opinion on any subject, and you could get at the statesman's; for he would be just the contrary. He would be wiser than the old woman at any rate. If a thing had been thought cruel, he would prove that it was humane: if barbarous, manly; if wise, foolish; if sense, nonsense. His creed was the antithesis of common sense, loyalty excepted. Economy he could turn into ridicule, "as a saving of cheese-parings and candle-ends;"—and total failure was with him "negative success." He had no occasion, for thus setting up for original thinking, to inquire into the truth or falsehood of any proposition, but to ascertain whether it was currently believed in, and then to contradict it point-blank. He made the vulgar prejudices of others "servile ministers" to his own solecisms. It was not easy to say whether he was in jest or earnest—but he contrived to hitch his extravagances into the midst of some grave debate; the House had their laugh for nothing; the question got into shape again, and Mr. Windham was allowed to have been more *brilliant* than ever.*

Mr. Windham was, I have heard, a silent man in company. Indeed his whole style was an artificial and studied imitation, or capricious caricature of Burke's bold, natural, discursive manner. This did not imply much spontaneous power or fertility of invention; he was an intellectual posture-master, rather than a man of real elasticity and vigor of mind. Mr. Pitt was also, I believe, somewhat taciturn and reserved. There was nothing clearly in the subject-matter of his speeches to connect with the ordinary topics of discourse, or with any given aspect of human life. One would expect him to be quite as much in the clouds as the automaton chess-player, or the last new Opera-singer. Mr. Fox said little in private, and complained that in writing he had no style. So (to compare great things with small) Jack Davies, the unrivalled racket-player, never said anything at all in company, and was what is understood by a modest man. When the racket was out of his hand, his occupation, his delight, his glory (that which he excelled all mankind in) was gone! So when Mr. Fox had no longer to keep up the ball of debate, with the floor of Saint Stephen's for a stage, and the world for spectators of the game, it is hardly to be wondered at that he felt a little at a loss—without his usual train of subjects, the same crowd of associations, the same spirit of competition, or stimulus to extraordinary exertion.

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* It must be granted, however, that there was something *piquant* and provoking in his manner of "making the worse appear the better reason." In keeping off the ill odor of a bad cause, he applied hartshorn and burnt feathers to the offended sense; and did not, like Mr. Canning, treat us with the faded flowers of his oratory, like the faint smell of a perfumer's shop, or try to make Government "love-locks" of dead men's hair!

The excitement of leading in the House of Commons (which, in addition to the immediate attention and applause that follows, is a sort of whispering gallery to all Europe) must act upon the brain like brandy or laudanum upon the stomach ; and must, in most cases, produce the same debilitating effects afterwards. A man's faculties must be quite exhausted, his virtue gone out of him. That any one accustomed all his life to the tributary roar of applause from the great council of the nation, should think of dieting himself with the prospect of posthumous fame as an author, is like offering a confirmed dram-drinker a glass of fair water for his morning's draught. Charles Fox is not to be blamed for having written an indifferent history of James II., but for having written a history at all. It was not his business to write a history —his business was *not to have made any more Coalitions!* But he found writing so dull, he thought it better to be a colleague of Lord Grenville! He did not want style (to say so is nonsense, because the style of his speeches was just and fine)—he wanted a sounding-board in the ear of posterity to try his periods upon. If he had gone to the House of Commons in the morning, and tried to make a speech fasting, when there was nobody to hear him, he might have been equally disconcerted at his want of style. The habit of speaking is the habit of being heard, and of wanting to be heard ; the habit of writing is the habit of thinking aloud, but without the help of an echo. The orator sees his subject in the eager looks of his auditors ; and feels doubly conscious, doubly impressed with it in the glow of their sympathy ; the author can only look for encouragement in a blank piece of paper. The orator feels the impulse of popular enthusiasm,

——— like proud seas under him :

the only Pegasus the writer has to boast, is the hobby-horse of his own thoughts and fancies. How is he to get on then? From the lash of necessity. We accordingly see persons of rank and fortune continually volunteer into the service of oratory—and the State ; but we have few authors who are not paid by the sheet! —I myself have heard Charles Fox engaged in familiar conversation. It was in the Louvre. He was describing the pictures to two persons that were with him. He spoke rapidly, but very unaffectedly. I remember his saying—"All these blues and greens and reds are the Guercinos; you may know them by the colors." He set Opie right as to Domenichino's Saint Jerome. "You will find," he said, "though you may not be struck with it at first, that there is a great deal of truth and good sense in that picture." There was a person at one time a good deal with Mr. Fox, who, when the opinion of the latter was asked on any subject, very frequently interposed to give the answer. This sort of tantalizing interruption was ingeniously enough compared by some one, to walking up Ludgate-hill, and having the spire of St. Martin's constantly getting in your way, when you wish to see the dome of St. Paul's!—Burke, it is said, conversed as he spoke in public, and as he wrote. He was communicative, diffuse, magnificent. "What is the use," said Mr. Fox to a friend, "of Sheridan's trying to swell himself out in this manner, like the frog in the fable?"—alluding to his speech on Warren Hastings's trial. "It is very well for Burke to express himself in that figurative way. It is natural to him; he talks so to his wife, to his servants, to his children; but as for Sheridan, he either never opens his mouth at all, or if he does, it is to utter some joke. It is out of the question for him to affect these *Orientalisms.*" Burke once came into Sir Joshua Reynolds's painting-room, when one of his pupils was sitting for one of the sons of Count Ugolino; this gentleman was personally introduced to him;—"Ah! then," said Burke, "I find that Mr. N— has not only a head that would do for Titian to paint, but is himself a painter." At another time, he came in when Goldsmith was there, and poured forth such a torrent of violent personal abuse against the King, that they got to high words, and Goldsmith threatened to leave the room if he did not desist. Goldsmith bore testimony to his powers of conversation. Speaking of Johnson, he said, "Does he wind into a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?" With respect to his facility in composition, there are contradictory accounts. It has been stated by some, that he wrote out a plain sketch first, like a sort of dead coloring, and added the ornaments and tropes afterwards. I have been assured by a person who had the best means of knowing, that the *Letter to a Noble Lord* (the most rapid. impetu ous, glancing, and sportive of all his works) was printed off, and the proof sent to him: and that it was returned to the printing-office with so many alterations and passages interlined, that the compositors refused to correct it as it was—took the whole matter in pieces, and re-set the copy. This looks like elaboration and after-thought. It was also one of Burke's latest compositions.* A regularly bred speaker would have made up his mind beforehand; but Burke's mind being, as originally constituted and by its first bias, that of an author, never became set. It was in further search and progress. It had an internal spring left. It was not tied down to the printer's form. It could still project itself into new beauties, and explore strange regions from the unwearied impulse of its own delight or curiosity. Perhaps among the passages interlined, in this case, were the description of the Duke of Bedford, as "the Leviathan among all the creatures of the crown,"—the *catalogue raisonnée* of the Abbé Sieyes's pigeon-holes,—or the comparison of the English Monarchy to "the proud keep of Windsor, with its double belt of kindred and coeval towers." Were these to be given up? If he had had to make his defence of his pension in the House of Lords, they would not have been ready in time, it appears; and, besides, would have been too difficult of execution on the spot: a speaker must not set his heart on such forbidden fruit. But Mr. Burke was an author, and the press did not "shut the gates of *genius* on mankind." A set of oratorical flourishes, indeed, is soon exhausted, and is generally all that the extempore speaker can safely aspire to. Not so with the resources of art or nature, which are inexhaustible, and which the writer has time to seek out, to embody, and to fit into shape and use, if he has the strength, the courage, and patience to do so.

There is then a certain range of thought and expression beyond the regular rhetorical routine, on which the author, to vindicate his title, must trench somewhat freely. The proof that this is understood to be so, is, that what is called an oratorical style is exploded from all good writing; that we immediately lay down an article, even in a common newspaper, in which such phrases occur as "the Angel of Reform," "the drooping Genius of Albion;" and that a very brilliant speech at a loyal dinner-party makes a very flimsy, insipid pamphlet. The orator has to get up for a certain occasion a striking compilation of partial topics, which, "to leave no rubs or botches in the work," must be pretty familiar, as well as palatable to his hearers; and in doing this, he may avail himself of all the resources of an artificial memory. The writer must be original, or he is nothing. He is not to take up with ready-made goods; for he has time allowed him to create his own materials, to make novel combinations of thought and fancy, to contend with unforeseen difficulties of style and execution, while we look on, and admire the growing work in secret and at leisure. There is a degree of finishing as well as of solid strength in writing, which is not to be got at every day, and we can wait for perfection. The author owes a debt to truth and nature which he cannot satisfy at sight, but he has pawned his head in redeeming it. It is not a string of clap-traps to answer a temporary or party-purpose,—violent, vulgar, and illiberal,—but general and lasting truth that we require at his hands. We go to him as pupils, not as partisans. We have a right to expect from him profounder views of things; finer observations; more ingenious illustrations; happier and bolder expressions. He is to give the choice and picked results of a whole life of study; what he has struck out in his most felicitous moods, has treasured up with most pride, has labored to bring to light with most anxiety and confidence of success. He may turn a period in his head fifty different ways, so that it comes out smooth and round at last. He may have caught a glimpse of a simile, and it may have vanished again: let him be on the watch for it, as the idle boy watches for the lurking-place of the adder. We can wait. He is not satisfied with a reason he has offered for something: let him wait till he finds a better reason. There is some word, some phrase, some idiom that expresses a particular idea better than any other, but he cannot for the life of him recollect it: let him wait till he does. Is it strange that among twenty thousand words in the English language, the one of all others that he most needs should have escaped him? There are more things in nature than there are words in the English language, and he must not expect to lay rash hands on them all at once.

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* Tom Paine, while he was busy about any of his works, used to walk out, compose a sentence or paragraph in his head, come home and write i down, and never altered it afterwards He then added another, and so on, till the whole was completed.

Learn to *write* slow: all other graces
Will follow in their proper places.

You allow a writer a year to think of a subject; he should not put you off with a truism at last. You allow him a year more to find out words for his thoughts; he should not give us an echo of all the fine things that have been said a hundred times.* All authors, however, are not so squeamish; but take up with words and ideas as they find them delivered down to them. Happy are they who write Latin verses! Who copy the style of Dr. Johnson! Who hold up the phrase of ancient Pistol! They do not trouble themselves with those hair-breadth distinctions of thought or meaning that puzzle nicer heads—let us leave them to their repose! A person in habits of composition often hesitates in conversation for a particular word: it is because he is in search of the best word, and *that* he cannot hit upon. In writing he would stop till it came.† It is not true, however, that the scholar could avail himself of a more ordinary word if he chose, or readily acquire a command of ordinary language; for his associations are habitually intense, not vague and shallow; and words occur to him only as *tallies* to certain modifications of feeling. They are links in the chain of thought. His imagination is fastidious, and rejects all those that are "of no mark or likelihood." Certain words are in his mind indissolubly wedded to certain things; and none are admitted at the *levée* of his thoughts, but those of which the banns have been solemnized with scrupulous propriety. Again, the student finds a stimulus to literary exertion, not in the immediate *éclat* of his undertaking, but in the difficulty of his subject, and the progressive nature of his task. He is not wound up to a sudden and extraordinary effort of presence of mind; but is for ever awake to the silent influxes of things, and his life is one long labor. Are there no sweeteners of his toil? No reflections, in the absence of popular applause or social indulgence, to cheer him on his way? Let the reader judge. *His* pleasure is the counterpart of, and borrowed from the same source as the writer's. A man does not read out of vanity, nor in company, but to amuse his own thoughts. If the reader, from disinterested and merely intellectual motives, relishes an author's "fancies and good nights," the last may be supposed to have relished them no less. If he laughs at a joke, the inventor chuckled over it to the full as much. If he is delighted with a phrase, he may be sure the writer jumped at it; if he is pleased to cull a straggling flower from the page, he may believe that it was plucked with no less fondness from the face of nature. Does he fasten, with gathering brow and looks intent, on some difficult speculation? He may be convinced that the writer thought it a fine thing to split his brain in solving so curious a problem, and to publish his discovery to the world. There is some satisfaction in the contemplation of power; there is also a little pride in the conscious possession of it. With what pleasure do we read books! If authors could but feel this, or remember what they themselves once felt, they would need no other temptation to persevere.

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* Just as a poet ought not to cheat us with lame metre and defective rhymes, which might be excusable in an improvisatori versifier.

† That is essentially a bad style which seems as if the person writing it never stopped for breath, nor gave himself a moment's pause, but strove to make up by redundancy and fluency for want of choice and correctness of expression

To conclude this account with what perhaps I ought to have set out with, a definition of the character of an author. There are persons who, in society, in public intercourse, feel no excitement,

> "Dull as the lake that slumbers in the storm,"

but who, when left alone, can lash themselves into a foam. They are never less alone than when alone. Mount them on a dinner-table, and they have nothing to say; shut them up in a room by themselves, and they are inspired. They are "made fierce with dark keeping." In revenge for being tongue-tied, a torrent of words flows from their pens, and the storm which was so long collecting comes down apace. It never rains but it pours. Is not this strange, unaccountable? Not at all so. They have a real interest, a real knowledge of the subject, and they cannot summon up all that interest, or bring all that knowledge to bear, while they have anything else to attend to. Till they can do justice to the feeling they have, they can do nothing. For this they look into their own minds, not in the faces of a gaping multitude. What they would say (if they could) does not lie at the orifices of the mouth ready for delivery, but is wrapped in the folds of the heart and registered in the chambers of the brain. In the sacred cause of truth that stirs them, they would put their whole strength, their whole being into requisition; and as it implies a greater effort to drag their words and ideas from their lurking-places, so there is no end when they are once set in motion. The whole of a man's thoughts and feelings cannot lie on the surface, made up for use; but the whole must be a greater quantity, a mightier power, if they could be got at, layer under layer, and brought into play by the levers of imagination and reflection. Such a person then sees further and feels deeper than most others. He plucks up an argument by the roots, he tears out the very heart of his subject. He has more pride in conquering the difficulties of a question, than vanity in courting the favor of an audience. He wishes to satisfy himself before he pretends to enlighten the public. He takes an interest in things in the abstract more than by common consent. Nature is his mistress, truth his idol. The contemplation of a pure idea is the ruling passion of his breast. The intervention of other people's notions, the being the immediate object of their censure or their praise, puts him out. What will tell, what will produce an effect, he cares little about; and therefore he produces the greatest. The *personal* is to him an impertinence; so he conceals himself and writes. Solitude "becomes his glittering bride, and airy thoughts his children." Such a one is a true author; and not a member of any Debating Club, or Dilettanti Society whatever!*

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* I have omitted to dwell on some other differences of body and mind that often prevent the same person from shining in both capacities of speaker and writer. There are natural impediments to public speaking such as the want of a strong voice and steady nerves. A high authority of the present day (Mr. Canning) has thought this a matter of so much import

ance, that he goes so far as even to let it affect the constitution of Parliament, and conceives that gentlemen who have not bold foreheads and brazen lungs, but modest pretensions and patriotic views, should be allowed to creep into the great assembly of the nation through the avenue of close boroughs, and not be called upon "to face the storms of the hustings." In this point of view, Stentor was a man of genius, and a noisy jack-pudding may cut a considerable figure in the "Political House that Jack built." I fancy Mr. C. Wynne is the only person in the kingdom who has fully made up his mind that a total defect of voice is the most necessary qualification for a Speaker of the House of Commons:

ESSAY XV.

On certain inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynolds' discourses.

The two chief points which Sir Joshua aims at in his Discourses are to show that excellence in the Fine Arts is the result of pains and study, rather than of genius, and that all beauty, grace, and grandeur are to be found, not in actual nature, but in an idea existing in the mind. On both these points he appears to have fallen into considerable inconsistencies, or very great latitude of expression, so as to make it difficult to know what conclusion to draw from his various reasonings. I shall attempt little more in this Essay than to bring together several passages, that from their contradictory import seem to imply some radical defect in Sir Joshua's theory, and a doubt as to the possibility of placing an implicit reliance on his authority.

To begin with the first of these subjects, the question of original genius. In the Second Discourse, On the Method of Study, Sir Joshua observes towards the end,

"There is one precept, however, in which I shall only be opposed by the vain, the ignorant, and the idle. I am not afraid that I shall repeat it too often. *You must have no dependence on your own genius.* If you have great talents, industry will improve them: if you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply their deficiency. Nothing is denied to well-directed labor; nothing is to be obtained without it. Not to enter into metaphysical discussions on the nature or essence of genius, I will venture to assert, that assiduity unabated by difficulty, and a disposition eagerly directed to the object of its pursuit, will produce effects similar to those which some call the result of *natural powers.*"—Vol. i., p. 44.

The only tendency of the maxim here laid down seems to be to lure those students on with the hopes of excellence who have no chance of succeeding, and to deter those who have, from relying on the only prop and source of real excellence—the strong bent and impulse of their natural powers. Industry alone can only produce mediocrity; but mediocrity in art is not worth the trouble of industry. Genius, great natural powers will give industry and ardor in the pursuit of their proper object, but not if you divert them from that object into the trammels of common-place mechanical labor. By this method you neutralise all distinction of character—make a pedant of the blockhead, and a drudge of the man of genius. What, for instance, would have been the effect of persuading Hogarth or Rembrandt to place no dependence on their own genius, and to apply themselves to the general study of the different branches of the art and of every sort of excellence, with a confidence of success proportioned to their misguided efforts, but to destroy both those great artists? "You take my house when you do take the prop that doth sustain my house?" You undermine the superstructure of art when you strike at its main pillar and support, confidence and faith in nature. We might as well advise a person who had discovered a silver or a lead mine on his estate to close it up, or the common farmer to plough up every acre he rents in the hope of discovering hidden treasure, as advise the man of original genius to neglect his particular vein for the study of rules and the imitation of others, or try to persuade the man of no strong natural powers that he can supply their deficiency by laborious application.—Sir Joshua soon after, in the Third Discourse, alluding to the terms, *inspiration*, *genius*, *gusto*, applied by critics and orators to painting, proceeds,

"Such is the warmth with which both the Ancients and Moderns speak of this divine principle of the art; but, as I have formerly observed, enthusiastic admiration seldom promotes knowledge. Though a student by such praise may have his attention roused and a desire excited of running in this great career; yet it is possible that what has been said to excite, may only serve to deter him. He examines his own mind, and perceives there nothing of that divine inspiration, with which, he is told, so many others have been favored. He never travelled to heaven to gather new ideas; and he finds himself possessed of no other qualifications than what mere common observation and a plain understanding can confer. Thus he becomes gloomy amidst the splendor of figurative declamation, and thinks it hopeless to pursue an object which he supposes out of the reach of human industry."—Vol. i., p. 56.

Yet presently after he adds,

"It is not easy to define in what this great style consists; nor to describe by words the proper means of acquiring it, *if the mind of the student should be at all capable of such an acquisition*. Could we teach taste or genius by rules, they would be no longer taste and genius."—*Ibid.*, p. 57.

Here then Sir Joshua admits that it is a question whether the student is likely *to be at all capable of such an acquisition* as the higher excellences of art, though he had said in the passage just quoted above, that it is within the reach of constant assiduity, and of a disposition eagerly directed to the object of its pursuit, to effect all that is usually considered as the result of natural powers. Is the theory which our author means to inculcate a mere delusion, a mere arbitrary assumption? At one moment Sir Joshua attributes the hopelessness of the student to attain perfection to the discouraging influence of certain figurative and overstrained expressions, and in the next doubts his capacity for such an acquisition under any circumstances. Would he have him hope against hope, then? If he "examines his own mind and finds nothing there of that divine inspiration, with which he is told so many others have been favored," but which he has never felt himself; if "he finds himself possessed of no other qualifications" for the highest efforts of genius and imagination "than what mere common observation and a plain understanding can confer," he may as well desist at once from "ascending the brightest heaven of invention:"—if the very idea of the divinity of art deters instead of animating him, if the enthusiasm with which others speak of it damps the flame in his own breast, he had better not enter into a competition where he wants the first principle of success, the daring to aspire and the hope to excel. He may be assured he is not the man. Sir Joshua himself was not struck at first by the sight of the masterpieces of the great style of art, and he seems unconsciously to have adopted this theory to show that he might still have succeeded in it but for want of due application. His hypothesis goes to this—to make the common run of his readers fancy they can do all that can be done by genius, and to make the man of genius believe he can only do what is to be done by mechanical rules and systematic industry. This is not a very feasible scheme; nor is Sir Joshua sufficiently clear and explicit in his reasoning in support of it.

In speaking of Carlo Maratti, he confesses the inefficiency of this doctrine in a very remarkable manner:—

"Carlo Maratti succeeded better than those I have first named, and I think owes his superiority to the extension of his views: besides his master Andrea Sacchi, he imitated Raffaelle, Guido, and the Caraccis. It is true, there is nothing very captivating in Carlo Maratti; but this proceeded from a want which cannot be completely supplied; that is, want of strength of parts. *In this certainly men are not equal;* and a man can bring home wares only in proportion to the capital with which he goes to market. Carlo, by diligence, made the most of what he had: but there was undoubtedly a heaviness about him, which extended itself uniformly to his invention, expression, his drawing, coloring, and the general effect of his pictures. The truth is, he never equalled any of his patterns in any one thing, and he added little of his own."—*Ibid.*, p. 172.

Here then Reynolds, we see, fairly gives up the argument. Carlo, after all, was a heavy hand; nor could all his diligence and his making the most of what he had, make up for the want of "natural powers." Sir Joshua's good sense pointed out to him the truth in the individual instance, though he might be led astray by a vague general theory. Such however is the effect of a false principle that there is an evident bias in the artist's mind to make genius lean upon others for support, instead of trusting to itself, and developing its own incommunicable resources. So in treating in the Twelfth Discourse of the way in which great artists are formed, Sir Joshua reverts very nearly to his first position.

"The daily food and nourishment of the mind of an Artist is found in the great works of his predecessors. There is no other way for him to become great himself. *Serpens, nisi serpentem* *comederit, non fit draco.* Raffaelle, as it appears from what has been said, had carefully studied the works of Masaccio, and indeed there was no other, if we except Michael Angelo (whom he likewise imitated)* so worthy of his attention: and though his manner was dry and hard, his compositions formal, and not enough diversified, according to the custom of Painters in that early period, yet his works possess that grandeur and simplicity which accompany, and even sometimes proceed from, regularity and hardness of manner. We must consider the barbarous state of the arts before his time, when skill in drawing was so little understood, that the best of the painters could not even fore-shorten the foot, but every figure appeared to stand upon his toes; and what served for drapery had, from the hardness and smallness of the folds, too much the appearance of cords clinging round the body. He first introduced large drapery, flowing in an easy and natural manner: indeed he appears to be the first who discovered the path that leads to every excellence to which the art afterwards arrived, and may therefore be justly considered as one of the Great Fathers of Modern Art.

"Though I have been led on to a longer digression respecting this great painter than I intended, yet I cannot avoid mentioning another excellence which he possessed in a very eminent degree; he was as much distinguished among his contemporaries for his diligence and industry, *as he was for the natural faculties of his mind.* We are told that his whole attention was absorbed in the pursuit of his art, and that he acquired the name of Masaccio from his total disregard to his dress, his person, and all the common concerns of life. He is indeed *a signal instance of what well-directed diligence* will do in a short time: he lived but twenty-seven years; yet in that short space carried the art so far beyond what it had before reached, that he appears to stand alone as a model for his successors. Vasari gives a long catalogue of painters and sculptors who formed their taste and learned their art, by studying his works; among those, he names Michael

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* How careful is Sir Joshua, even in a parenthesis, to insinuate the obligations of this great genius to others, as if he would have been nothing without them!

Angelo, Lionardo da Vinci, Pietro Perugino, Raffaelle, Bartoomeo, Andrea del Sarto, Il Rosso, and Pierino del Vaga."—Vol. ii., p. 95.

Sir Joshua here again halts between two opinions. He tells us the names of the painters who formed themselves upon Masaccio's style: he does not tell us on whom he formed himself. At one time the natural faculties of his mind were as remarkable as his industry; at another he was only a signal instance of what well-directed diligence will do in a short time. Then again "he appears to have been the first who discovered the path that leads to every excellence to which the Art afterwards arrived," though he is introduced in an argument to show that "the daily food and nourishment of the mind of the Artist must be found in the works of his predecessors." There is something surely very wavering and unsatisfactory in all this.

Sir Joshua, in another part of his work, endeavors to reconcile and prop up these contradictions by a paradoxical sophism which I think turns upon himself. He says, "I am on the contrary persuaded, that by imitation only" (by which he has just explained himself to mean the study of other masters) "variety and even originality of invention is produced. I will go further; even genius, at least what is so called, is the child of imitation. But as this appears to be contrary to the general opinion, I must explain my position before I enforce it.

"Genius is supposed to be a power of producing excellences, which are out of the reach of the rules of art; a power which no precepts can teach, and which no industry can acquire.

"This opinion of the impossibility of acquiring those beauties, which stamp the work with the character of genius, supposes that it is something more fixed than in reality it is; and that we always do and ever did agree in opinion, with respect to what should be considered as the characteristic of genius. But the truth is, that the *degree* of excellence which proclaims *Genius* is different in different times and different places; and what shows it to be so is, that mankind have often changed their opinion upon this matter.

"When the Arts were in their infancy, the power of merely drawing the likeness of any object, was considered as one of its greatest efforts. The common people, ignorant of the principles of art, talk the same language even to this day. But when it was found that every man could be taught to do this, and a great deal more, merely by the observance of certain precepts; the name of Genius then shifted its application, and was given only to him who added the peculiar character of the object he represented; to him who had invention, expression, grace, or dignity, in short, those qualities or excellences, the power of producing which could not *then* be taught by any known and promulgated rules.

"We are very sure that the beauty of form, the expression of the passions, the art of composition, even the power of giving a general air of grandeur to a work, is at present very much under the dominion of rules. These excellences were heretofore considered merely as the effects of genius; and justly, if genius is not taken for inspiration, but as the effect of close observation and experience."—THE SIXTH DISCOURSE, Vol. i., p. 153.

Sir Joshua began with undertaking to show that "genius was the child of the imitation of others; and now it turns out not to be inspiration indeed, but the effect of close observation and experience." The whole drift of this argument appears to be contrary to what the writer intended; for the obvious inference is that the essence of genius consists entirely, both in kind and degree, in the single circumstance of originality. The very same things are or are not genius, according as they proceed from invention or from mere imitation. In so far as a thing is original, as it has never been done before, it acquires and it deserves the appellation of genius: in so far as it is not original, and is borrowed from others or taught by rule, it is not, neither is it called, genius. This does not make much for the supposition that genius is a traditional and second-hand quality. Because, for example, a man without much genius can copy a picture of Michael Angelo's does it follow that there was no genius in the original design, or that the inventor and the copyist are equal? If indeed, as Sir Joshua labors to prove, mere imitation of existing models and attention to established rules could produce results exactly similar to those of natural powers, if the progress of art as a learned profession were a gradual but continual accumulation of individual excellence, instead of being a sudden and almost miraculous start to the highest beauty and grandeur nearly at first, and a regular declension to mediocrity ever after, then indeed the distinction between genius and imitation would be little worth contending for ; the causes might be different, the effects would be the same, or rather skill to avail ourselves of external advantages would be of more importance and efficacy than the most powerful internal resources. But as the case stands, all the great works of art have been the offspring of individual genius, either projecting itself before the general advances of society or striking out a separate path for itself; and all the rest is but labor in vain. For every purpose of emulation or instruction, we go back to the original inventors, not to those who imitated, and as it is falsely pretended, improved upon their models : or if those who followed have at any time attained as high a rank or surpassed their predecessors, it was not from borrowing their excellences, but by unfolding new and exquisite powers of their own, of which the moving principle lay in the individual mind, and not in the stimulus afforded by previous example and general knowledge. Great faults, it is true, may be avoided, but great excellences can never be attained in this way. If Sir Joshua's hypothesis of progressive refinement in art was anything more than a verbal fallacy, why does he go back to Michael Angelo as the God of his idolatry ? Why does he find fault with Carlo Maratti for being heavy ? Or why does he declare as explicitly as truly, that " the judgment, after it had been long passive, by degrees loses its power of becoming active when exertion is necessary ?" —Once more to point out the fluctuation in Sir Joshua's notions on this subject of the advantages of natural genius and artificial study, he says, when recommending the proper objects of ambition to the young artist—

" My advice in a word is this : keep your principal attention fixed upon the higher excellences. If you compass them, and compass nothing more, you are still in the first class. We may regret the innumerable beauties which you may want ; you may be very imperfect ; but still you are an imperfect artist of the highest order."—Vol. i., p. 116.

This is the Fifth Discourse. In the Seventh our artist seems to waver, and fling a doubt on his former decision, whereby " it loses some color."

" Indeed perfection in an inferior style may be reasonably preferred to mediocrity in the highest walks of art. A landscape of Claude Lorraine *may** be preferred to a history by Luca Giordano : but hence appears the necessity of the connoisseur's knowing in what consists the excellency of each class, in order to judge how near it approaches to perfection."—*Ibid.*, p. 217.

As he advances, however, he grows bolder, and altogether discards his theory of judging of the artist by the class to which he belongs—" But we have seen the sanction of all mankind," he says, " in preferring genius in a lower rank of art, to feebleness and insipidity in the highest." This is in speaking of Gainsborough. The whole passage is excellent, and, I should think, conclusive against the general and factitious style of art on which he insists so much at other times.

" On this ground, however unsafe, I will venture to prophesy, that two of the last distinguished Painters of that country, I mean Pompeio Battoni, and Raffaelle Mengs, however great their names may at present sound in our ears,† will very soon fall into the rank of Imperiale, Sebastian Concha, Placido Constanza, Massuccio, and the rest of their immediate predecessors ; whose names, though equally renowned in their life-time, are now fallen into what is little short of total oblivion. I do not say that those painters were not superior to the artist I allude to,‡ and whose loss we lament, in a certain routine of practice, which, to the eyes of common observers, has the air of a learned composition, and bears a sort of superficial resemblance to the manner of the great men who went before them. I know this perfectly well ; but I know likewise, that a man looking for real and lasting reputation must unlearn much of the common-place method so observable in the works of the artists whom I have named. For my own part, I confess, I take more interest in and am more captivated with the powerful impression of nature, which Gainsborough exhibited in his portraits and in his landscapes, and the interesting simplicity and elegance of his little ordinary beggar-children, than with any of the works of that School, since the time of Andrea Sacchi, or perhaps we may say, Carlo Maratti; two painters who may truly be said to be ULTIMI ROMANORUM.

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* If Sir Joshua had an offer to exchange a Luca Giordano in his collection for a Claude Lorraine, he would not have hesitated long about the preference.

† Written in 1788

‡ Gainsborough

"I am well aware how much I lay myself open to the censure and ridicule of the Academical professors of other nations, in preferring the humble attempts of Gainsborough to the works of those regular graduates in the great historical style. *But we have the sanction of all mankind in preferring genius in a lower rank of art to feebleness and insipidity in the highest.*"—Vol. ii., p. 152.

Yet this excellent artist and critic had said but a few pages before, when working upon his theory—"For this reason I shall beg leave to lay before you a few thoughts on the subject; to throw out some hints that may lead your minds to an opinion (which I take to be the true one) that Painting is not only not to be considered as an imitation operating by deception, but that it is, and ought to be, in many points of view and strictly speaking, no imitation at all of external nature. Perhaps it ought to be as far removed from the vulgar idea of imitation as the refined civilized state in which we live is removed from a gross state of nature; and those who have not cultivated their imaginations, which the majority of mankind certainly have not, may be said, in regard to arts, to continue in this state of nature. Such men will always prefer imitation" (the imitation of nature) "to that excellence which is addressed to another faculty that they do not possess; but these are not the persons to whom a painter is to look, any more than a judge of morals and manners ought to refer controverted points upon those subjects to the opinions of people taken from the banks of the Ohio, or from New Holland."—Vol. ii., p. 119.

In opposition to the sentiment here expressed, that "Painting is and ought to be, in many points of view and strictly speaking, no imitation at all of external nature," it is emphatically said in another place—"Nature is and must be the fountain which alone is inexhaustible; and from which all excellences must originally flow."—Discourse VI. Vol. i., p. 162.

I cannot undertake to reconcile so many contradictions, nor do I think it an easy task for the student to derive any simple or intelligible clue from these conflicting authorities and broken hints in the prosecution of his art. Sir Joshua appears to have imbibed from others (Burke or Johnson) a spurious metaphysical notion that art was to be preferred to nature, and learning to genius, with which his own good sense and practical observation were continually at war, but from which he only emancipates himself for a moment to relapse into the same error again shortly after.* The conclusion of the Twelfth Discourse is, I think, however, a triumphant and unanswerable denunciation of his own favorite paradox on the objects and study of art.

"Those artists" (he says with a strain of eloquent truth), "who have quitted the service of nature (whose service, when well understood, is *perfect freedom*), and have put themselves under the direction of I know not what capricious fantastical mistress, who fascinates and overpowers their whole mind, and from whose dominion there are no hopes of their being ever reclaimed (since they appear perfectly satisfied, and not at all conscious of their forlorn situation), like the transformed followers of Comus,

> 'Not once perceived their foul disfigurement;
> But boast themselves more comely than before.'

"Methinks, such men, who have found out so short a path, have no reason to complain of the shortness of life and the extent of art; since life is so much longer than is wanted for their improvement, or is indeed necessary for the accomplishment of their idea of perfection.† On the contrary, he who recurs to nature, at every recurrence renews his strength. The rules of art he is never likely to forget: they are few and simple: but Nature is refined, subtle, and infinitely various, beyond the power and retention of memory; it is necessary therefore to have continual recourse to her. In this intercourse, there is no end of his improvement: the longer he lives, the nearer he approaches to the true and perfect idea of Art."—Vol. ii., p. 108.

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* Sir Joshua himself wanted academic skill and patience in the details of his profession. From these defects he seems to have been alternately repelled by each theory and style of art, the simply natural and elaborately scientific, as it came before him; and in his impatience of each, to have been betrayed into a tissue of inconsistencies somewhat difficult to unravel.

† He had been before speaking of Boucher, Director of the French Academy, who told him that "when he was young, studying his art, he found it necessary to use models, but that he had left them off for many years."

ESSAY XVI.

The same Subject continued.

The first inquiry which runs through Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses is, whether the student ought to look at nature with his own eyes or with the eyes of others, and on the whole, he apparently inclines to the latter. The second question is, what is to be understood by nature; whether it is a general and abstract idea, or an aggregate of particulars; and he strenuously maintains the former of these positions. Yet it is not easy always to determine how far or with what precise limitations he does so.

The first germ of his speculations on this subject is to be found in two papers in the Idler. In the last paragraph of the second of these, he says,

"If it has been proved that the Painter, by attending to the invariable and general ideas of nature, produces beauty, he must, by regarding minute particularities and accidental discriminations, deviate from the universal rule, and pollute his canvas with deformity."—See Works, Vol. ii., p. 242.

In answer to this, I would say that deformity is not the being varied in the particulars, in which all things differ (for on this principle all nature, which is made up of individuals, would be a heap of deformity), but in violating general rules, in which they all or almost all agree. Thus there are no two noses in the world exactly alike, or without a great variety of subordinate parts, which may still be handsome, but a face without any nose at all, or a nose (like that of a mask) without any particularity in the details, would be a great deformity in art or nature. Sir Joshua seems to have been led into his notions on this subject either by an ambiguity of terms, or by taking only one view of nature. He supposes grandeur, or the general effect of the whole, to consist in leaving out the particular details, because these details are sometimes found without any grandeur of effect, and he therefore conceives the two things to be irreconcileable and the alternatives of each other. This is very imperfect reasoning. If the mere leaving out the details constituted grandeur, any one could do this: the greatest dauber would at that rate be the greatest artist. A house or sign-painter might instantly enter the lists with Michael Angelo, and might look down on the little, dry, hard manner of Raphael. But grandeur depends on a distinct principle of its own, not on a negation of the parts; and as it does not arise from their omission, so neither is it incompatible with their insertion or the highest finishing. In fact, an artist may give the minute particulars of any object one by one, and with the utmost care, and totally neglect the proportions, arrangement and general masses, on which the effect of the whole more immediately depends; or he may give the latter, viz., the proportions and arrangement of the larger parts and the general masses of light and shade, and leave all the minuter parts of which those parts are composed a mere blotch, one general smear, like the first crude and hasty getting in of the round-work of a picture: he may do either of these, or he may combine both, that is, finish the parts, but put them in their right places, and keep them in due subordination to the general effect and massing of the whole. If the exclusion of the parts were necessary to the grandeur of the whole composition, if the more entire this exclusion, if the more like a *tabula rasa*, a vague, undefined, shadowy and abstract representation the picture was, the greater the grandeur, there could be no danger of pushing this principle too far, and going the full length of Sir Joshua's theory without any restrictions or mental reservations. But neither of these suppositions is true. The greatest grandeur may co-exist with the most perfect, nay with a microscopic accuracy of detail, as we see it does often in nature: the greatest looseness and slovenliness of execution may be displayed without any grandeur at all either in the outline or distribution of the masses of color. To explain more particularly what I mean. I have seen and copied portraits by Titian, in which the eyebrows were marked with a number of small strokes, like hair lines (indeed, the hairs of which they were composed were in a great measure given)—but did this destroy the grandeur of expression, the truth of outline, arising from the arrangement of these hair-lines in a given form? The grandeur, the character, the expression remained, for the general form or arched and expanded outline remained, just as much as if it had been daubed in with a blacking-brush: the introduction of the internal parts and texture only added delicacy and truth to the general and striking effect of the whole. Surely a number of small dots or lines may be arranged into the form of a square or a circle indiscriminately; the square or circle, that is, the larger figure, remains the same, whether the line of which it consists is broken or continuous; as we may see in prints where the outlines, features, and masses remain the same in all varieties of mezzotinto, dotted and line engraving. If Titian in marking the appearance of the hairs had deranged the general shape and contour of the eyebrows, he would have destroyed the look of nature; but as he did not, but kept both in view, he proportionately improved his copy of it. So in what regards the masses of light and shade, the variety, the delicate transparency and broken transitions of the tints is not inconsistent with the greatest breadth or boldest contrasts. If the light, for instance, is thrown strongly on one side of a face, and the other is cast into deep shade, let the individual and various parts of the surface be finished with the most scrupulous exactness both in the drawing and in the colors: provided nature is not exceeded, this will not nor cannot destroy the force and harmony of the composition. One side of the face will still have that great and leading distinction of being seen in shadow, and the other of being seen in the light, let the subordinate differences be as many and as precise as they will. Suppose a panther is painted in the sun: will it be necessary to leave out the spots to produce breadth and the great style, or will this not be done more effectually by painting the spots on one side of his shaggy coat as they are seen in the light, and those of the other as they really appear in natural shadow? the two masses are thus preserved completely, and no offence is done to truth and nature. Otherwise we resolve the distribution of light and shade into *local coloring*. The masses, the grandeur exist equally in external nature with the local differences of different colors. Yet Sir Joshua seems to argue that the grandeur, the effect of the whole object, is confined to the general idea in the mind, and that all the littleness and individuality is in nature. This is an essentially false view of the subject. This grandeur, this general effect, is indeed always combined with the details, or what our theoretical reasoner would designate as *littleness* in nature: and so it ought to be in art, as far as art can follow nature with prudence and profit. What is the fault of Denner's style? It is, that he does *not* give this combination of properties: that he gives only one view of nature, that he abstracts the details, the finishing, the curiosities of natural appearances from the general result, truth and character of the whole, and in finishing every part with elaborate care, totally loses sight of the more important and striking appearance of the object as it presents itself to us in nature. He gives every part of a face; but the shape, the expression, the light and shade of the whole is wrong, and as far as can be from what is natural. He gives an infinite variety of tints, but they are not the tints of the human face, nor are they subjected to any principle of light and shade. He is different from Rembrandt or Titian. The English school, formed on Sir Joshua's theory, give neither the finishing of the parts nor the effect of the whole, but an inexplicable dumb mass without distinction or meaning. They do not do as Denner did, and think that not to do as he did is to do as Titian and Rembrandt did; I do not know whether they would take it as a compliment to be supposed to imitate nature. Some few artists, it must be said, have "of late reformed this indifferently among us! Oh! let them reform it altogether!" I have no doubt they would if they could; but I have some doubts whether they can or not. Before I proceed to consider the question of beauty and grandeur as it relates to the selection of form, I will quote a few passages from Sir Joshua with reference to what has been said on the imitation of particular objects. In the Third Discourse he observes, "I will now add that nature herself is not to be too closely copied. . . . A mere copier of nature *can never produce anything great; can never raise and enlarge the conceptions, or warm the heart of the spectator.* The wish of the genuine painter must be more extensive: instead of endeavoring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavor to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas; instead of seeking praise by deceiving the superficial sense of the spectator, he must strive for fame by captivating the imagination."—Vol. i., p. 53.

From this passage it would surely seem that there was nothing in nature but minute neatness and superficial effect: nothing great in *her* style, for an imitator of it can produce nothing great; nothing "to enlarge the conceptions or warm the heart of the spectator."

> "What word hath passed thy lips, Adam severe!"

All that is truly grand or excellent is a figment of the imagination, a vapid creation out of nothing, a pure effect of overlooking and scorning the minute neatness of natural objects. This will not do. Again, Sir Joshua lays it down without any qualification that

"The whole beauty and grandeur of the art consists in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, peculiarities, and *details* of every kind."—Page 58.

Yet at p. 82 we find him acknowledging a different opinion.

"I am very ready to allow" (he says in speaking of history-painting) "that *some* circumstances of minuteness and particularity *frequently* tend to give an air of truth to a piece, and *to interest the spectator in an extraordinary manner*. Such circumstances therefore cannot wholly be rejected: but if there be anything in the Art which requires peculiar nicety of discernment, it is the disposition of these minute circumstantial parts; which, according to the judgment employed in the choice, become so useful to truth or so injurious to grandeur."—Page 82.

That's true; but the sweeping clause against "all particularities and details of every kind" is clearly got rid of. The undecided state of Sir Joshua's feelings on this subject of the incompatibility between the whole and the details is strikingly manifested in two short passages which follow each other in the space of two pages. Speaking of some pictures of Paul Veronese and Rubens as distinguished by the dexterity and the unity of style displayed in them, he adds—

"It is by this and this alone, that the mechanical power is ennobled, and raised much above its natural rank. And it appears to me, that with propriety it acquires this character, as an instance of that superiority with which mind predominates over matter, by contracting into one whole what nature has made multifarious."—Vol. ii., p. 63.

This would imply that the principle of unity and integrity is only in the mind, and that nature is a heap of disjointed, disconnected particulars, a chaos of points and atoms. In the very next page, the following sentence occurs—

"As painting is an art, they" (the ignorant) "think they ought to be pleased in proportion as they see that art ostentatiously displayed; they will from this supposition prefer neatness, high finishing, and gaudy coloring, to the truth, simplicity and *unity* of nature."

Before, neatness and high finishing were supposed to belong exclusively to the littleness of nature, but here truth, simplicity and unity are her characteristics. Soon after, Sir Joshua says, "I should be sorry if what has been said should be understood to have any tendency to encourage that carelessness which leaves work in an unfinished state. I commend nothing for the want of exactness; I mean to point out that kind of exactness which is the best, and which is alone truly to be so esteemed."—Vol. ii., p. 65. This Sir Joshua has already told us consists in getting above "all particularities and details of every kind." Once more we find it is stated that

"It is in vain to attend to the variation of tints, if in that attentention the general hue of flesh is lost; or to finish ever so minutely the parts, if the masses are not observed, or the whole not well put together."

Nothing can be truer: but why always suppose the two things at variance with each other?

Titian's manner was then new to the world, but that unshaken truth on which it is founded, has fixed it as a model to all succeeding painters; and those who will examine into the artifice, will find it to consist in the power of generalizing, and in the shortness and simplicity of the means employed."—Page 51.

Titian's real excellence consisted in the power of generalizing and of *individualizing* at the same time: if it were merely the former, it would be difficult to account for the error immediately after pointed out by Sir Joshua. He says in the very next paragraph:

"Many artists, as Vasari likewise observes, have ignorantly imagined they are imitating the manner of Titian, when they leave their colors rough, and neglect the detail: but not possessing the principles on which he wrought, they have produced what he calls *goffe pitture,* absurd, foolish pictures."—*Ibid.*, p. 54.

Many artists have also imagined they were following the directions of Sir Joshua when they did the same thing, that is, neglected the detail, and produced the same results, vapid generalities, absurd, foolish pictures.

I will only give two short passages more, and have done with this part of the subject. I am anxious to confront Sir Joshua with his own authority.

"The advantage of this method of considering objects (*as a whole*) is what I wish now more particularly to enforce. At the same time I do not forget, that a painter must have the power of contracting as well as dilating his sight; because he that does not at all express particulars, expresses nothing; yet it is certain that a nice discrimination of minute circumstances, and a punctilious delineation of them, whatever excellence it may have (and I do not mean to detract from it), never did confer on the artist the character of Genius."—Vol. ii., p. 44.

At page 53, we find the following words.

"Whether it is the human figure, and animal, or even inanimate objects, there is nothing, however unpromising in appearance, but may be raised into dignity, convey sentiment, and produce emotion, in the hands of a painter of genius. What was said of Virgil, that he threw even the dung about the ground with an air of dignity, may be applied to Titian; whatever he touched, however naturally mean, and habitually familiar, by a kind of magic he invested with grandeur and importance." No, not by magic, but by seeking and finding in individual nature, and combined with details of every kind, that grace and grandeur and unity of effect which Sir Joshua supposes to be a mere creation of the artist's brain! Titian's practice was, I conceive, to give general appearances with individual forms and circumstances: Sir Joshua's theory goes too often, and in its prevailing bias, to separate the two things as inconsistent with each other, and thereby to destroy or bring into question that union of striking effect with accuracy of resemblance in which the essence of sound art (as far as relates to imitation) consists.

Farther, as Sir Joshua is inclined to merge the details of individual objects in general effect, so he is resolved to reduce all beauty or grandeur in natural objects to a central form or abstract idea of a certain class, so as to exclude all peculiarities or deviations from this ideal standard as unfit subjects for the artist's pencil, and as polluting his canvas with deformity. As the former principle went to destroy all exactness and solidity in particular things, this goes to confound all variety, distinctness, and characteristic force in the broader scale of nature. There is a principle of conformity in nature or of something in common between a number of individuals of the same class, but there is also a principle of contrast, of discrimination and identity, which is equally essential in the system of the universe and in the structure of our ideas both of art and nature. Sir Joshua would hardly neutralize the tints of the rainbow to produce a dingy grey, as a medium or central color: why then should he neutralize all features, forms, &c., to produce an insipid monotony? He does not indeed consider his theory of beauty as applicable to color, which he well understood, but insists upon, and literally enforces it as to form and ideal conceptions, of which he knew comparatively little, and where his authority is more questionable. I will not in this place undertake to show that his theory of a middle form (as the standard of taste and beauty) is not true of the outline of the human face and figure or other organic bodies, though I think that even there it is only one principle or condition of beauty; but I do say that it has little or nothing to do with those other capital parts of painting, color, character, expression, and grandeur of conception. Sir Joshua himself contends that "beauty in creatures of the same species is the medium or centre of all its various forms;" and he maintains that grandeur is the same abstraction of the species in the individual. Therefore beauty and grandeur must be the same thing, which they are not; so that this definition must be faulty. Grandeur I should suppose to imply something that elevates and expands the mind, which is chiefly power or magnitude. Beauty is that which soothes and melts it, and its source I apprehend is a certain harmony, softness, and gradation of form, within the limits of our customary associations, no doubt, or of what we expect of certain species, but not independent of every other consideration. Our critic himself confesses of Michael Angelo, whom he regards as the pattern of the great and sublime style, that "his people are a superior order of beings; there is nothing about them, nothing in the air of their actions or their attitudes, or the style or cast of their limbs or features, that reminds us of their belonging to our own species. Raffaelle's imagination is not so elevated: his figures are not so much disjoined from our own diminutive race of beings, though his ideas are chaste, noble, and of great conformity to their subjects. Michael Angelo's works have a strong, peculiar, and marked character: they seem to proceed from his own mind entirely, and that mind so rich and abundant, that he never needed or seemed to disdain to look abroad for foreign help. Raffaelle's materials are generally borrowed, though the noble structure is his own." FIFTH DISCOURSE. How does all this accord with the same writer's favorite theory that all beauty, all grandeur, and all excellence, consist in an approximation to that central form or habitual idea of mediocrity, from which every deviation is so much deformity and littleness? Michael Angelo's figures are raised above our diminutive race of beings, yet they are confessedly the standard of sublimity in what regards the human form. Grandeur then admits of an exaggeration of our habitual impressions; and "the strong, marked, and peculiar character which Michael Angelo has at the same time given to his works," does not take away from it. This is fact against argument. I would take Sir Joshua's word for the goodness of a picture, and for its distinguishing properties, sooner than I would for an abstract metaphysical theory. Our artist also speaks continually of high and low subjects. There can be no distinction of this kind upon his principle, that the standard of taste is the adhering to the central form of each species, and that every species is in itself equally beautiful. The painter of flowers, of shells, or of anything else, is equally elevated with Raphael or Michael, if he adheres to the generic or established form of what he paints: the rest, according to this definition, is a matter of indifference. There must therefore be something besides the central or customary form to account for the difference of dignity, for the high and low style in nature or in art. Michael Angelo's figures, we are told, are more than ordinarily grand: why, by the same rule, may not Raphael's be more than ordinarily beautiful, have more than ordinary softness, symmetry, and grace? Character and expression are still less included in the present theory. All character is a departure from the common-place form; and Sir Joshua makes no scruple to declare that expression destroys beauty. Thus he says,

"If you mean to preserve the most perfect beauty *in its most perfect state*, you cannot express the passions, all of which produce distortion and deformity, more or less, in the most beautiful faces."—Vol. i., p. 118.

He goes on—"Guido, from want of choice in adapting his subject to his ideas and his powers, or from attempting to preserve beauty where it could not be preserved, has in this respect succeeded very ill. His figures are often engaged in subjects that required great expression: yet his Judith and Holofernes, the daughter of Herodias with the Baptist's head, the Andromeda, and some even of the Mothers of the Innocents, have little more expression than his Venus attired by the Graces."—*Ibid.*

What a censure is this passed upon Guido, and what a condemnation of his own theory, which would reduce and level all that is truly great and praiseworthy in art to this insipid, tasteless standard, by setting aside as illegitimate all that does not come within the middle, central form! Yet Sir Joshua judges of Hogarth as he deviates from this standard, not as he excels in individual character, which he says is only good or tolerable as it partakes of general nature; and he might accuse Michael Angelo and Raphael, the one for his grandeur of style, the other for his expression; for neither are what he sets up as the goal of perfection. I will just stop to remark here, that Sir Joshua has committed himself very strangely in speaking of the character and expression to be found in the Greek statues. He says in one place—

"I cannot quit the Apollo, without making one observation on the character of this figure. He is supposed to have just discharged his arrow at the Python; and by the head retreating a little towards the right shoulder, he appears attentive to its effect. What I would remark, is the difference of this attention from that of the Discobolus, who is engaged in the same purpose, watching the effect of his Discus. The graceful, negligent, though animated air of the one, and the vulgar eagerness of the other, furnish an instance of the judgment of the ancient Sculptors *in their nice discrimination of character*. They are both equally true to nature, and equally admirable."—Vol. ii., p. 21.

After a few observations on the limited means of the art of Sculpture, and the inattention of the ancients to almost everything but form, we meet with the following passage:—

"Those who think Sculpture can express more than we have allowed may ask, by what means we discover, at the first glance, the character that is represented in a Bust, a Cameo, or Intaglio? I suspect it will be found, on close examination, by him who is resolved not to see more than he really does see, that the figures are distinguished by their *insignia* more than by any variety of form or beauty. Take from Apollo his Lyre, from Bacchus his Thyrsus and Vine-leaves, and Meleager the Boar's Head, and there will remain little or no difference in their characters. In a Juno, Minerva, or Flora, the idea of the artist seems to have gone no further than representing perfect beauty, and afterwards adding the proper attributes, with a total indifference to which they gave them."

[What then becomes of that "nice discrimination of character" for which our author has just before celebrated them?]

"Thus John De Bologna, after he had finished a group of a young man holding up a young woman in his arms, with an old man at his feet, called his friends together, to tell him what name he should give it, and it was agreed to call it The Rape of the Sabines; and this is the celebrated group which now stands before the old Palace at Florence. The figures have the same general expression which is to be found in most of the antique Sculpture; and yet it would be no wonder, if future critics should find out delicacy of expression which was never intended; and go so far as to see, in the old man's countenance, the exac relation which he bore to the woman who appears to be taken from him."—*Ibid.*, p. 25.

So it is that Sir Joshua's theory seems to rest on an inclined plane, and is always glad of an excuse to slide, from the severity of truth and nature, into the milder and more equable regions of insipidity and inanity! I am sorry to say so, but so it appears to me.

I confess, it strikes me as a self-evident truth that variety or contrast is as essential a principle in art and nature as uniformity, and as necessary to make up the harmony of the universe and the contentment of the mind. Who would destroy the shifting effects of light and shade, the sharp, lively opposition of colors in the same or in different objects, the streaks in a flower, the stains in a piece of marble, to reduce all to the same neutral, dead coloring, the same middle tint? Yet it is on this principle that Sir Joshua would get rid of all variety, character, expression, and picturesque effect in forms, or at least measure the worth or the spuriousness of all these according to their reference to or departure from a given or average standard. Surely, nature is more liberal, art is wider than Sir Joshua's theory. Allow (for the sake of argument) that all forms are in themselves indifferent, and that beauty or the sense of pleasure in forms can therefore only arise from customary association, or from that middle impression to which they all tend: yet this cannot by the same rule apply to other things. Suppose there is no capacity in form to affect the mind except from its corresponding to previous expectation, the same thing cannot be said of power or grandeur. No one can say that the idea of power does not affect the mind with the sense of awe and sublimity. That is, power and weakness, grandeur and littleness, are not indifferent things, the perfection of which consists in a medium between both. Again, expression is not a thing indifferent in itself, which derives its value or its interest solely from its conformity to a neutral standard. Who would neutralize the expression of pleasure and pain? Or say that the passions of the human mind, pity, love, joy, sorrow, &c., are only interesting to the imagination and worth the attention of the artist, as he can reduce them to an equivocal state which is neither pleasant nor painful, neither one thing nor the other? Or who would stop short of the utmost refinement, precision, and force in the delineation of each? Ideal expression is not neutral expression, but extreme expression. Again, character is a thing of peculiarity, of striking contrast, of distinction, and not of uniformity. It is necessarily opposed to Sir Joshua's exclusive theorv, and yet it is surely a curious and interesting field of speculation for the human mind. Lively, spirited discrimination of character is one source of gratification to the lover of nature and art, which it could not be, if all truth and excellence consisted in rejecting individual traits. Ideal character is not common-place, but consistent character marked throughout, which may take place in history or portrait. Historical truth in a picture is the putting the different features of the face or muscles of the body into consistent action. The *picturesque* altogether depends on particular points or qualities of an object, projecting as it were beyond the middle line of beauty, and catching the eye of the spectator. It was less, however, my intention to hazard any speculations of my own, than to confirm the common-sense feelings on the subject by Sir Joshua's own admissions in different places. In the Tenth Discourse, speaking of some objections to the Apollo, he has these remarkable words:—

"In regard to the last objection (*viz.* that the lower half of the figure is longer than just proportion allows) it must be remembered, that Apollo is here in the exertion of *one of his peculiar powers*, which is swiftness; he has therefore that proportion which is best adapted to that character. This is no more incorrectness, than where there is given to an Hercules an extraordinary swelling and strength of muscles."—Vol. ii., p. 20.

Strength and activity then do not depend on the middle form; and the middle form is to be sacrificed to the representation of these positive qualities. Character is thus allowed not only to be an integrant part of the antique and classical style of art, but even to take precedence of and set aside the abstract idea of beauty. Little more would be required to justify Hogarth in his Gothic resolution, that if he were to make a figure of Charon, he would give him bandy legs, because watermen are generally bandy-legged. It is very well to talk of the abstract idea of a man or of a God, but if you come to anything like an intelligible proposition, you must either individualize and define, or destroy the very idea you contemplate. Sir Joshua goes into this question at considerable length in the Third Discourse.

"To the principle I have laid down, that the idea of beauty in each species of beings is an invariable one, it may be objected," he says, "that in every particular species there are various central forms, which are separate and distinct from each other, and yet are undeniably beautiful; that in the human figure, for instance, the beauty of Hercules is one, of the Gladiator another, of the Apollo another, which makes so many different ideas of beauty. It is true, indeed, that these figures are each perfect in their kind, though of different characters and proportions; but still none of them is the representation of an individual, but of a class. And as there is one general form, which, as I have said, belongs to the human kind at large, so in each of these classes there is one common idea which is the abstract of the various individual forms belonging to that class. Thus, though the forms of childhood and agė differ exceedingly, there is a common form in childhood, and a common form in age, which is the more perfect as it is remote from all peculiarities. But I must add further, that though the most perfect forms of each of the general divisions of the human figure are ideal, and superior to any individual form of that class; yet the highest perfection of the human figure is not to be found in any of them. It is not in the Hercules, nor in the Gladiator, nor in the Apollo; but in that form which is taken from all, and which partakes equally of the activity of the Gladiator, of the delicacy of the Apollo, and of the muscular strength of the Hercules. For perfect beauty in any species must combine all the characters which are beautiful in that species. It cannot consist in any one to the exclusion of the rest: no one, therefore, must be predominant, that no one may be deficient."—Vol. ii., p. 64.

Sir Joshua here supposes the distinctions of classes and character to be necessarily combined with the general leading idea of a middle form. This middle form is not to confound age, sex, circumstance, under one sweeping abstraction: but we must limit the general idea by certain specific differences and characteristic marks, belonging to the several subordinate divisions and ramifications of each class. This is enough to show that there is a principle of individuality as well as of abstraction inseparable from works of art as well as nature. We are to keep the human form distinct from that of other living beings, that of men from that of women; we are to distinguish between age and infancy, between thoughtfulness and gaiety, between strength and softness. Where is this to stop? But Sir Joshua turns round upon himself in this very passage, and says, "No: we are to unite the strength of the Hercules with the delicacy of the Apollo; for perfect beauty in any species must combine all the characters which are beautiful in that species." Now if these different characters are beautiful in themselves, why not give them for their own sakes and in their most striking appearances, instead of qualifying and softening them down in a neutral form; which must produce a compromise, not a union of different excellences. If all excess of beauty, if all character is deformity, then we must try to lose it as fast as possible in other qualities. But if strength is an excellence, if activity is an excellence, if delicacy is an excellence, then the perfection, *i. e.* the highest degree of each of these qualities cannot be attained but by remaining satisfied with a less degree of the rest. But let us hear what Sir Joshua himself advances on this subject in another part of the Discourses.

"Some excellences bear to be united, and are improved by union: others are of a discordant nature: and the attempt to unite them only produces a harsh jarring of incongruent principles. The attempt to unite contrary excellences (of form, for instance*) in a single figure, *can never escape degenerating into the monstrous but by sinking into the insipid; by taking away its marked character, and weakening its expression.*

"Obvious as these remarks appear, there are many writers on our art, who not being of the profession, and consequently not knowing what can or cannot be done, have been very liberal of absurd praises in their description of favorite works. They always find in them what they are resolved to find. They praise excellences that can hardly exist together; and above all things are fond of describing with great exactness the expression of a mixed passion, which more particularly appears to me out of the reach of our art.*

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* These are Sir Joshua's words.

"Such are many disquisitions which I have read on some of the Cartoons and other pictures of Raffaelle, where the critics have described their own imaginations; or indeed where the excellent master himself may have attempted this expression of passions above the powers of the art; and has, therefore, by an indistinct and imperfect marking, left room for every imagination with equal probability to find a passion of his own. What has been, and what can be done in the art, is sufficiently difficult: we need not be mortified or discouraged at not being able to execute the conceptions of a romantic imagination. Art has its boundaries, though imagination has none. We can easily, like the ancients, suppose a Jupiter to be possessed of all those powers and perfections which the subordinate Deities were endowed with separately. Yet when they employed their art to represent him, they confined his character to majesty alone. Pliny, therefore, though we are under great obligations to him for the information he has given us in relation to the works of the ancient artists, is very frequently wrong when he speaks of them, which he does very often, in the style of many of our modern connoisseurs. He observes that in a statue of Paris, by Euphranor, you might discover at the same time three different characters; the dignity of a Judge of the Goddesses, the Lover of Helen, and the Conqueror of Achilles. A statue in which you endeavor to unite stately dignity, youthful elegance, and stern valor, must surely possess none of these to any eminent degree.

"From hence it appears, that there is much difficulty as well as danger in an endeavor to concentrate in a single subject those various powers, which, rising from various points, naturally move in different directions."—Vol. i., p. 120.

What real clue to the art or sound principles of judging the student can derive from these contradictory statements, or in what manner it is possible to reconcile them one to the other, I confess I am at a loss to discover. As it appears to me, all the varieties of nature in the infinite number of its qualities, combinations, characters, expressions, incidents, &c., rise from distinct points or centres, and must move in distinct directions, as the forms of different species are to be referred to a separate standard. It is the object of art to bring them out in all their force, clearness, and precision, and not to blend them into a vague, vapid, nondescript *ideal* conception, which pretends to unite, but in reality destroys. Sir Joshua's theory limits nature and paralyzes art. According to him, the middle form or the average of our various impressions is the source from which all beauty, pleasure, interest, imagination springs. I contend, on the contrary, that this very variety is good in itself, nor do I agree with him that the whole of nature as it exists in fact is stark naught, and that there is nothing worthy of the contemplation of a wise man but that *ideal perfection* which never existed in the world nor even on canvas. There is something fastidious and sickly in Sir Joshua's system. His code of taste consists too much of negations, and not enough of positive, prominent qualities. It accounts for nothing but the beauty of the common Antique, and hardly for that. The merit of Hogarth, I grant, is different from that of the Greek statues ; but I deny that Hogarth is to be measured by this standard, or by Sir Joshua's middle forms : he has powers of instruction and amusement that "rising from a different point, naturally move in a different direction," and completely attain their end. It would be just as reasonable to condemn a comedy for not having the pathos of a tragedy or the stateliness of an epic poem. If Sir Joshua Reynolds's theory were true, Dr. Johnson's Irene would be a better tragedy than any of Shakspeare's.

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* I do not know that: but I do not think the two passions could be expressed by expressing neither or something between both.

The reasoning of the Discourses is, I think then, deficient in the following particulars:

1. It seems to imply that general effect in a picture is produced by leaving out the details, whereas the largest masses and the grandest outline are consistent with the utmost delicacy of finishing in the parts.

2. It makes no distinction between beauty and grandeur, but refers both to an *ideal* or middle form, as the centre of the various forms of the species, and yet inconsistently attributes the grandeur

of Michael Angelo's style to the superhuman appearance of his prophets and apostles.

3. It does not at any time make mention of power or magnitude in an object as a distinct source of the sublime (though this is acknowledged unintentionally in the case of Michael Angelo, &c.), nor of softness or symmetry of form as a distinct source of beauty, independently of, though still in connection with another source arising from what we are accustomed to expect from each individual species.

4. Sir Joshua's theory does not leave room for character, but rejects it as an anomaly.

5. It does not point out the source of expression, but considers it as hostile to beauty ; and yet, lastly, he allows that the middle form, carried to the utmost theoretical extent, neither defined by character, nor impregnated by passion, would produce nothing but vague, insipid, unmeaning generality.

In a word, I cannot think that the theory here laid down is clear and satisfactory, that it is consistent with itself, that it accounts for the various excellences of art from a few simple principles, or that the method which Sir Joshua has pursued in treating the subject is, as he himself expresses it, "*a plain and honest method.*" It is, I fear, more calculated to baffle and perplex the student in his progress, than to give him clear lights as to the object he should have in view, or to furnish him with strong motives of emulation to attain it.

ESSAY XVII.

On the Qualifications necessary to Success in Life.

It is curious to consider the diversity of men's talents, and the causes of their failure or success, which are not less numerous and contradictory than their pursuits in life. Fortune does not always smile on merit:—"the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong:" and even where the candidate for wealth or honors succeeds, it is as often, perhaps, from the qualifications which he wants as from those which he possesses; or the eminence which he is lucky enough to obtain, is owing to some faculty or acquirement, which neither he nor anybody else suspected. There is a balance of power in the human mind, by which defects frequently assist in furthering our views, as superfluous excellences are converted into the nature of impediments; and again, there is a continual substitution of one talent for another, through which we mistake the appearance for the reality, and judge (by implication) of the means from the end. So a Minister of State wields the House of Commons by his *manner* alone; while his friends and his foes are equally at a loss to account for his influence, looking for it in vain in the matter or style of his speeches. So the air with which a celebrated barrister waved a white cambric handkerchief passed for eloquence. So the buffoon is taken for a wit. To be thought wise, it is for the most part necessary only to seem so; and the noisy demagogue is easily translated, by the popular voice, into the orator and patriot. Qualities take their color from those that are next to them, as the cameleon borrows its hue from the nearest object; and unable otherwise to grasp the phantom of our choice or our ambition, we do well to lay violent hands on something else within our reach, which bears a general resemblance to it; and the impression of which, in proportion as the thing itself is cheap and worthless, is likely to be gross, obvious, striking, and effectual. The way to secure success, is to be more anxious about obtaining than about deserving it; the surest hindrance to it is to have too high an opinion of the discernment of the public. He who is determined not to be satisfied with anything short of perfection, will never do anything at all, either to please himself or others. The question is not what we ought to do, but what we *can* do for the best. An excess of modesty is in fact an excess of pride, and more hurtful to the individual, and less advantageous to society, than the grossest and most unblushing vanity—

> Aspiring to be Gods, if angels fell,
> Aspiring to be angels, men rebel.

If a celebrated artist in our own day had stayed to do justice to his principal figure in a generally admired painting, before he had exhibited it, it would never have seen the light. He has passed on to other things more within his power to accomplish, and more within the competence of the spectators to understand. They see what he has done, which is a great deal—they could not have judged of, or given him credit for the *ineffable idea* in his own mind, which he might vainly have devoted his whole life in endeavoring to embody. The picture, as it is, is good enough for the age and the public. If it had been ten times better, its merits would have been thrown away: and if it had been ten times better in the more refined and lofty conception of character and sentiment, and had failed in the more palpable appeal to the senses and prejudices of the vulgar, in the usual "appliances and means to boot," it would never have done. The work might have been praised by a few, a very few, and the artist himself have pined in penury and neglect. Mr. Wordsworth has given us the *essence* of poetry in his works, without the machinery, the apparatus of poetical diction, the theatrical pomp, the conventional ornaments; and we see what he has made of it.

The way to fame, through merit alone, is the narrowest, the steepest, the longest, the hardest of all others—(that it is the most certain and lasting, is even a doubt)—the most sterling reputation is, after all, but a species of imposture. As for ordinary cases of success and failure, they depend on the slightest shades of character or turn of accident—" some trick not worth an egg "—

> There's but the twinkling of a star
> Betwixt a man of peace and war;
> A thief and justice, fool and knave,
> A huffing officer and a slave;
> A crafty lawyer and pick-pocket,
> A great philosopher and a blockhead;
> A formal preacher and a player,
> A learned physician and manslayer.

Men are in numberless instances qualified for certain things, for no other reason than because they are qualified for nothing else. Negative merit is the passport for negative success. In common life, the narrowness of our ideas and appetites is more favorable to the accomplishment of our designs, by confining our attention and ambition to one single object, than a greater enlargement of comprehension or susceptibility of taste, which (as far as the trammels of custom and routine of business are concerned) only operate as diversions to our ensuring the *main chance;* and, even in the pursuit of arts and science, a dull plodding fellow will often do better than one of a more mercurial and fiery cast—the mere unconsciousness of his own deficiencies, or of anything beyond what he himself can do, reconciles him to his mechanical progress, and enables him to perform all that lies in his power with labor and patience. By being content with mediocrity, he advances beyond it; whereas the man of greater taste or genius may be supposed to fling down his pen or pencil in despair, haunted with the idea of unattainable excellence, and ends in being nothing, because he cannot be everything at once. Those even who have done the greatest things, were not always perhaps the greatest men. To do any given work, a man should not be greater in himself than the work he has to do; the faculties which he has beyond this, will be *faculties to let,* either not used, or used idly or unprofitably, to hinder, not to help. To do any one thing best, there should be an exclusiveness, a concentration, a bigotry, a blindness of attachment to that one object; so that the widest range of knowledge and most diffusive subtlety of intellect will not uniformly produce the most beneficial results;—and the performance is very frequent-y in the inverse ratio, not only of the pretensions, as we might superficially conclude, but of the real capacity. *A part is greater than the whole:* and this old saying seems to hold true in moral and intellectual questions also—in nearly all that relates to the mind of man, which cannot embrace the whole, but only a part.

I do not think (to give an instance of what I mean) that Milton's mind was (so to speak) greater than the Paradise Lost; it was just big enough to fill that mighty mould; the shrine contained the Godhead. Shakspeare's genius was, I should say, greater than anything he has done, because it still soared free and unconfined beyond whatever he undertook—ran over, and could not be "constrained by mastery" of his subject. Goldsmith, in his Retaliation, celebrates Burke as one who was kept back in his dazzling, wayward career, by the supererogation of his talents—

> Though equal to all things, for all things unfit,
> Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit.

Dr. Johnson, in Boswell's Life, tells us that the only person whose conversation he ever *sought* for improvement was George Psalmanazar: yet who knows anything of this extraordinary man now, but that he wrote about twenty volumes of the Universal History—invented a Formosan alphabet and vocabulary—being a really learned man, contrived to pass for an impostor, and died no one knows how or where! The well known author of the "Inquiry concerning Political Justice," in conversation has not a word to throw at a dog; all the stores of his understanding or genius he reserves for his books, and he has need of them, otherwise there would be *hiatus in manuscriptis*. He says little, and that little were better left alone, being both dull and nonsensical; his talk is as flat as a pancake, and there is no leaven in it, he has not dough enough to make a loaf and a cake; he has no idea of anything till he has wound up, like a clock, not to speak, but to write, and then he seems like a person risen from sleep or from the dead. The author of the *Diversions of Purley*, on the other hand, besides being the inventor of the theory of grammar, was a politician, a wit, a master of conversation, and overflowing with an *interminable babble*—that fellow had cut and come again in him, and

> "Tongue with a garnish of brains;"

but it only served as an excuse to cheat posterity of the definition of a verb, one of those conversational *ruses de guerre* by which he put off his guests at Wimbledom with some teasing equivoque which he would explain the next time they met—and made him die at last with a nostrum in his mouth! The late Professor Porson was said to be a match for the Member for Old Sarum in argument and raillery:—he was a profound scholar, and had wit at will—yet what did he come to? His jests have evaporated with the marks of the wine on the tavern table; the page of Thucydides or Æschylus, which was stamped on his brain, and which he could read there with equal facility backwards or forwards, is contained, after his death, as it was while he lived, just as well in the volume on the library shelf. The man of perhaps the greatest ability now living is the one who has not only done the least, but who is actually incapable of ever doing anything worthy of him—unless he had a hundred hands to write with, and a hundred mouths to utter all that it hath entered into his heart to conceive, and centuries before him to embody the endless volumes of his waking dreams. Cloud rolls over cloud; one train of thought suggests and is driven away by another; theory after theory is spun out of the bowels of his brain, not like the spider's web, compact and round, a citadel and a snare, built for mischief and for use; but, like the gossamer, stretched out and entangled without end, clinging to every casual object, flitting in the idle air, and glittering only in the ray of fancy. No subject can come amiss to him, and he is alike attracted and alike indifferent to all—he is not tied down to any one in particular—but floats from one to another, his mind everywhere finding its level, and feeling no limit but that of thought—now soaring with its head above the stars, now treading with fairy feet among flowers, now winnowing the air with winged words—passing from Duns Scotus to Jacob Behmen, from the Kantean philosophy to a conundrum, and from the Apocalypse to an acrostic—taking in the whole range of poetry, painting, wit, history, politics, metaphysics, criticism, and private scandal—every question giving birth to some new thought, and every thought "discoursed in eloquent music," that lives only in the ear of fools, or in the report of absent friends. Set him to write a book, and he belies all that has been ever said about him—

> Ten thousand great ideas filled his mind,
> But with the clouds they fled, and left no trace behind.

Now there is ———, who never had an idea in his life, and who therefore has never been prevented by the fastidious refinements of self-knowledge, or the dangerous seductions of the Muse, from succeeding in a number of things which he has attempted, to the utmost extent of his dulness, and contrary to the advice and opinion of all his friends. He has written a book without being able to spell, by dint of asking questions—has painted draperies with great exactness, which have passed for finished portraits—daubs in an unaccountable figure or two, with a background, and on due deliberation calls it history—he is dubbed an Associate after being twenty times black-balled, wins his way to the highest honors of the Academy, through all the gradations of discomfiture and disgrace, and may end in being made a foreign Count! And yet (such is the principle of distributive justice in matters of taste) he is just where he was. We judge of men not by what they do, but by what they are. *Non ex quovis ligno fit Mercurius.* Having once got an idea of ———, it is impossible that anything he can do should ever alter it—though he were to paint like Raphael and Michael Angelo, no one in the secret would give him credit for it, and "though he had all knowledge, and could speak with the tongues of angels," yet without genius he would be nothing. The original sin of being what he is, renders his good works and most meritorious efforts null and void. "You cannot gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles." Nature still prevails over art. You look at ———, as you do at a curious machine, which performs certain puzzling operations, and as your surprise ceases, gradually unfolds other powers which you would little expect—but do what it will, it is but a machine still; the *thing* is without a soul!

Respice finem, is the great rule in all practical pursuits: to attain our journey's end, we should look little to the right or to the left; the knowledge of excellence as often deters and distracts, as it stimulates the mind to exertion; and hence we may see some reason, why the general diffusion of taste and liberal arts is not always accompanied with an increase of individual genius.

As there is a degree of dulness and phlegm, which, in the long run, sometimes succeeds better than the more noble and aspiring impulses of our nature (as the beagle by its sure tracing overtakes the bounding stag), so there is a degree of animal spirits and showy accomplishment, which enables its possessors "to get the start of the majestic world," and bear the palm alone. How often do we see vivacity and impertinence mistaken for wit; fluency for argument; sound for sense; a loud or musical voice for eloquence! Impudence again is an equivalent for courage; and the assumption of merit and the possession of it are too often considered as one and the same thing. On the other hand, simplicity of manner reduces the person who cannot so far forego his native disposition as by any effort to shake it off, to perfect insignificance in the eyes of the vulgar, who, if you do not seem to doubt your own pretensions, will never question them; and on the same principle, if you do not try to palm yourself on them for what you are not, will never be persuaded you can be anything. Admiration, like mocking, is catching: and the good opinion which gets abroad of us begins at home. If a man is not as much astonished at his own acquirements—as proud of and as delighted with the bauble, as others would be if put into sudden possession of it, they hold that true desert and he must be strangers to each other: if he entertains an idea beyond his own immediate profession or pursuit, they think very wisely he can know nothing at all: if he does not play off the quack or the coxcomb upon them at every step, they are confident he is a dunce and a fellow of no pretensions. It has been sometimes made a matter of surprise that Mr. Pitt did not talk politics out of the House; or that Mr. Fox conversed like any one else on common subjects; or that Walter Scott is fonder of an old Scotch ditty or antiquarian record, than of listening to the praises of the Author of Waverley. On the contrary, I cannot conceive how any one who feels conscious of certain powers, should always be laboring to convince others of the fact; or how a person, to whom their exercise is as familiar as the breath he draws, should think it worth his while to convince them of what to him must seem so very simple, and at the same time, so very evident. I should not wonder, however, if the Author of the Scotch Novels laid an undue stress on the praises of the Monastery. We nurse the ricketty child, and prop up our want of self-confidence by the opinion of friends. A man (unless he is a fool) is never *vain*, but when he stands in need of the tribute of adulation to strengthen the hollowness of his pretensions; nor *conceited*, but when he can find no one to flatter him, and is obliged secretly to pamper his good opinion of himself, to make up for the want of sympathy in others. A *damned* author has the highest sense of his own merits, and an inexpressible contempt for the judgment of his contemporaries; in the same manner that an actor who is hissed or hooted from the stage, creeps into exquisite favor with himself, in proportion to the blindness and injustice of the public. A prose-writer, who has been severely handled in the Reviews, will try to persuade himself that there is nobody else who can write a word of English: and we have seen a poet of our time, whose works have been much, but not (as he thought) sufficiently admired, undertake formally to prove, that no poet, who deserved the name of one, was ever popular in his life-time, or scarcely after his death!

There is nothing that floats a man sooner into the tide of reputation, or oftener passes current for genius, than what might be called *constitutional talent*. A man without this, whatever may be his worth or real powers, will no more get on in the world than a leaden Mercury will fly into the air; as any pretender with it, and with no one quality beside to recommend him, will be sure either to blunder upon success, or will set failure at defiance. By constitutional talent I mean, in general, the warmth and vigor given to a man's ideas and pursuits by his bodily *stamina*, by mere physical organization. A weak mind in a sound body is better, or at least more profitable, than a sound mind in a weak and crazy conformation. How many instances might I quote! Let a man have a quick circulation, a good digestion, the bulk, and thews, and sinews of a man, and the alacrity, the unthinking confidence inspired by these; and without an atom, a shadow of the *mens divinior*, he shall strut, and swagger, and vapor and jostle his way through life, and have the upper-hand of those who are his betters in everything but health and strength. His jests shall be echoed with loud laughter, because his own lungs begin to crow like chanticleer, before he has uttered them; while a little hectic nervous humorist shall stammer out an admirable conceit that is damned in the doubtful delivery—*vox faucibus hæsit.*—The first shall tell a story as long as his arm, without interruption, while the latter stops short in his attempts from mere weakness of chest: the one shall be empty and noisy and successful in argument, putting forth the most common-place things "with a confident brow and a throng of words, that come with more than impudent sauciness from him," while the latter shrinks from an observation "too deep for his hearers," into the delicacy and unnoticed retirement of his own mind. The one shall never feel the want of intellectual resources, because he can *back* his opinions with his person; the other shall lose the advantages of mental superiority, seek to anticipate contempt by giving offence, court mortification in despair of popularity, and even in the midst of public and private admiration, extorted slowly by incontrovertible proofs of genius, shall never get rid of the awkward, uneasy sense of personal weakness and insignificance, contracted by early and long-continued habit. What imports the inward to the outward man, when it is the last that is the general and inevitable butt of ridicule or object of admiration?—It has been said that a good face is a letter of recommendation. But the finest face will not carry a man far, unless it is set upon an active body, and a stout pair of shoulders. The countenance is the index of a man's talents and attainments: his figure is the criterion of his progress through life. We may have seen faces that spoke "a soul as fair—

> "Bright as the children of yon azure sheen"—

yet that met with but an indifferent reception in the world—and that being supported by a couple of spindle-shanks and a weak stomach, in fulfilling what was expected of them,

> "Fell flat, and shamed their worshippers."

Hence the successes of such persons did not correspond with their deserts. There was a natural contradiction between the physiognomy of their minds and bodies! The phrase, "a good-looking man," means different things in town and country; and artists have a separate standard of beauty from other people. A country-squire is thought good-looking, who is in good condition like his horse: a country-farmer, to take the neighbors' eyes, must seem stall fed, like the prize-ox; they ask, "how he cuts up in the caul, how he tallows in the kidneys." The *letter-of-recommendation* face, in general, is not one that expresses the finer movements of thought or of the soul, but that makes part of a vigorous and healthy form. It is one in which Cupid and Mars take up their quarters, rather than Saturn or Mercury. It may be objected here that some of the greatest favorites of fortune have been little men. "A little man, but of high fancy," is Sterne's description of Mr. Hammond Shandy. But then they have been possessed of strong fibres and an iron constitution. The late Mr. West said, that Bonaparte was the best made man he ever saw in his life. In other cases the gauntlet of contempt which a puny body and a fiery spirit are forced to run, may determine the possessors to aim at great actions; indignation may make men heroes as well as poets, and thus revenge them on the niggardliness of nature and the prejudices of the world. I remember Mr. Wordsworth's saying, that he thought ingenious poets had been of small and delicate frames, like Pope; but that the greatest (such as Shakspeare and Milton) had been healthy, and cast in a larger and handsomer mould. So were Titian, Raphael, and Michael Angelo. This is one of the few observations of Mr. Wordsworth's I recollect worth quoting, and I accordingly set it down as his, because I understand he is tenacious on that point.

In love, in war, in conversation, in business, confidence and resolution are the principal things. Hence the poet's reasoning:

> "For women, born to be controll'd,
> Affect the loud, the vain, the bold."

Nor is this peculiar to them, but runs all through life. It is the opinion we appear to entertain of ourselves, from which (thinking we must be the best judges of our own merits) others accept their idea of us on trust. It is taken for granted that every one pretends to the utmost he can do, and he who pretends to little, is supposed capable of nothing. The humility of our approaches to power or beauty ensures a repulse, and the repulse makes us unwilling to renew the application; for there is pride as well as humility in this habitual backwardness and reserve. If you do not bully the world, they will be sure to insult over you, because they think they can do it with impunity. They insist upon the arrogant assumption of superiority somewhere, and if you do not prevent them, they will practise it on you. Some one must top the part of Captain in the play. Servility however chimes in, and plays Scrub in the farce. Men patronize the fawning and obsequious, as they submit to the vain and boastful. It is the air of modesty and independence, which will neither be put upon itself, nor put upon others, that they cannot endure—that excites all the indignation they should feel for pompous affectation, and all the contempt they do not show to meanness and duplicity. Our indolence, and perhaps our envy take part with our cowardice and vanity in all this. The obtrusive claims of empty ostentation, played off like the ring on the finger, fluttering and sparkling in our sight, relieve us from the irksome task of seeking out obscure merit: the scroll of virtues written on the bold front, or triumphing in the laughing eye, save us the trouble of sifting the evidence and deciding for ourselves: besides, our self-love receives a less sensible shock from encountering the mere semblance than the solid substance of worth; folly chuckles to find the blockhead put over the wise man's head, and cunning winks to see the knave, by his own good leave, transformed into a saint.

> "Doubtless, the pleasure is as great
> In being cheated as to cheat."

In all cases, there seems a sort of compromise, a principle of collusion between imposture and credulity. If you ask what sort of adventurers have swindled tradesmen of their goods, you will find they are all *likely* men, with plausible manners or a handsome equipage, hired on purpose:—if you ask what sort of gallants have robbed women of their hearts, you will find they are those who have jilted hundreds before, from which the willing fair conceives the project of fixing the truant to herself—so the bird flutters its idle wings in the jaws of destruction, and the foolish moth rushes into the flame that consumes it! *There is no trusting to appearances*, we are told; but this maxim is of no avail, for men are the eager dupes of them. Life, it has been said, is "the art of being well deceived;" and accordingly, hypocrisy seems to be the great business of mankind. The game of fortune is, for the most part, set up with counters; so that he who will not cut in because he has no gold in his pocket, must sit out above half his time, and lose his chance of sweeping the tables. Delicacy is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, considered as rusticity; and sincerity of purpose is the greatest affront that can be offered to society. To insist on simple truth, is to disqualify yourself for place or patronage—the less you deserve, the more merit in their encouraging you; and he who, in the struggle for distinction, trusts to realities and not to appearances, will in the end find himself the object of universal hatred and scorn. A man who thinks to gain and keep the public ear by the force of style, will find it very up-hill work; if you wish to pass for a great author, you ought not to look as if you were ignorant that you had ever written a sentence or discovered a single truth. If you keep your own secret, be assured the world will keep it for you. A writer, whom I know very well, cannot gain an admission to Drury-lane Theatre, because he does not lounge into the lobbies, or sup at the Shakspeare—nay, the same person having written upwards of sixty columns of original matter on politics, criticism, belles-lettres, and *virtù* in a respectable Morning Paper, in a single half-year, was, at the end of that period, on applying for a renewal of his engagement, told by the Editor "he might give in a specimen of what he could do!" One would think sixty columns of the Morning Chronicle were a sufficient specimen of what a man could do But while this person was thinking of his next answer to Vetus, or his account of Mr. Kean's performance of Hamlet, he had neglected "to point the toe," to hold up his head higher than usual (having acquired a habit of poring over books when young), and to get a new velvet collar to an old-fashioned great coat. These are "the graceful ornaments to the columns of a newspaper—the

Corinthian capitals of a polished style!" This unprofitable servant of the press found no difference in himself before or after he became known to the readers of the Morning Chronicle, and it accordingly made no difference in his appearance or pretensions. "Don't you remember," says Gray, in one of his letters, "Lord C—— and Lord M——, who are now great statesmen, little dirty boys playing at cricket? For my own part, I don't feel myself a bit taller, or older, or wiser, than I did then." It is no wonder that a poet, who thought in this manner of himself, was hunted from college to college,—has left us so few precious specimens of his fine powers, and shrunk from his reputation into a silent grave!

"I never knew a man of genius a coxcomb in dress," said a man of genius and a sloven in dress. I *do* know a man of genius who is a coxcomb in his dress, and in everything else. But let that pass.

> "C'est un mauvais métier que celui de médire."

I also know an artist who has at least the ambition and the boldness of genius, who has been reproached with being a coxcomb, and with affecting singularity in his dress and demeanor. If he is a coxcomb that way, he is not so in himself, but a rattling harebrained fellow, with a great deal of unconstrained gaiety, and impetuous (not to say turbulent) life of mind! Happy it is when a man's exuberance of self-love flies off to the circumference of a broad-brimmed hat, descends to the toes of his shoes, or carries itself off with the peculiarity of his gait, or even vents itself in a little professional quackery;—and when he seems to think sometimes of you, sometimes of himself, and sometimes of others, and you do not feel it necessary to pay to him all the finical devotion, or to submit to be treated with the scornful neglect of a proud beauty, or some Prince Prettyman. It is well to be something besides the coxcomb, for our own sake as well as that of others; but to be born wholly without this faculty or gift of Providence, a man had better have had a stone tied about his neck, and been cast into the sea.

In general, the consciousness of internal power leads rather to a disregard of, than a studied attention to external appearance. The wear and tear of the mind does not improve the sleekness of the skin, or the elasticity of the muscles. The burden of thought weighs down the body like a porter's burden. A man cannot stand so upright or move so briskly under it as if he had nothing to carry in his head or on his shoulders. The rose on the cheek and the canker at the heart do not flourish at the same time; and he who has much to think of, must take many things to heart; for thought and feeling are one. He who can truly say, *Nihil humani a me alienum puto*, has a world of cares on his hands, which nobody knows anything of but himself. This is not one of the least miseries of a studious life. The common herd do not by any means give him full credit for his gratuitous sympathy with their concerns; but are struck with his lack-lustre eye and wasted appearance. They cannot translate the expression of his countenance out of the vulgate; they mistake the knitting of his brows for the frown of displeasure, the paleness of study for the languor of sickness, the furrows of thought for the regular approaches of old age. They read his looks, not his books; have no clue to penetrate the last recesses of the mind, and attribute the height of abstraction to more than an ordinary share of stupidity. "Mr. —— never seems to take the slightest interest in anything," is a remark I have often heard made in a whisper. People do not like your philosopher at all, for he does not look, say, or think as they do; and they respect him still less. The majority go by personal appearances, not by proofs of intellectual power; and they are quite right in this, for they are better judges of the one than of the other. There is a large party who undervalue Mr. Kean's acting (and very properly, as far as they are concerned), for they can see that he is a little ill-made man, but they are incapable of entering into the depth and height of the passion in his Othello. A nobleman of high rank, sense, and merit, who had accepted an order of knighthood, on being challenged for so doing by a friend, as a thing rather degrading to him than otherwise, made answer—"What you say, may be very true; but I am a little man, and am sometimes jostled, and treated with very little ceremony in walking along the streets; now the advantage of this new honor will be that when people see the star at my breast, they will every one make way for me with the greatest respect.' Pope bent himself double and ruined his constitution by over-study when young. He was hardly indemnified by all his posthumous fame, "the flattery that soothes the dull cold ear of death," nor by the admiration of his friends, nor the friendship of the great, for the distortion of his person, the want of robust health, and the insignificant figure he made in the eyes of strangers, and of Lady Mary Wortley Montague. Not only was his diminutive and misshapen form against him in such trivial toys, but it was made a set-off and a bar to his poetical pretensions by his brother-poets, who ingeniously converted the initial and final letters of his name into the invidious appellation A. P. E. He probably had the passage made under-ground from his garden to his grotto, that he might not be rudely gazed at in crossing the road by some untutored clown; and perhaps started to see the worm he trod upon writhed into his own form, like Elshie the Black Dwarf. Let those who think the mind everything and the body nothing, "ere we have shuffled off this mortal coil," read that fine moral fiction, or the real story of David Ritchie—believe and tremble!*

It may be urged that there is a remedy for all this in the appeal from the ignorant many to the enlightened few. But the few who are judges of what is called real and solid merit, are not forward to communicate their occult discoveries to others: they are withheld partly by envy, and partly by pusillanimity. The strongest minds are by rights the most independent and ingenuous: but then they are competitors in the lists, and jealous of the prize.

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* It is more desirable to be the handsomest than the wisest man in his Majesty's dominions, for there are more people who have eyes than understandings. Sir John Suckling tells us that

> He prized black eyes and a lucky hit
> At bowls, above all the trophies of wit.

In like manner, I would be permitted to say, that I am somewhat sick of this trade of authorship, where the critics look askance at one's best-meant efforts, but am still fond of those athletic exercises, where they do not keep two scores to mark the game, with Whig and Tory notches. The accomplishments of the body are obvious and clear to all: those of the mind are recondite and doubtful, and therefore grudgingly acknowledged, or held up as the sport of prejudice, spite, and folly.

The prudent (and the wise are prudent!) only add their hearty applause to the acclamations of the multitude, which they can neither silence nor dispute. So Mr. Gifford dedicated those verses to Mr. Hoppner, when securely seated on the heights of fame and fortune, which before he thought might have savored too much of flattery or friendship. Those even who have the sagacity to discover it, seldom volunteer to introduce obscure merit into publicity, so as to endanger their own pretensions: they praise the world's idols, and bow down at the altars which they cannot overturn by violence or undermine by stealth! Suppose literary men to be the judges and vouchers for literary merit:—but it may sometimes happen that a literary man (however high in genius or in fame) has no passion but the love of distinction, and hates every person or thing that interferes with his inadmissible and exorbitant claims. Dead to every other interest, he is alive to that, and starts up, like a serpent when trod upon, out of the slumber of wounded pride. The cold slime of indifference is turned into rank poison at the sight of your approach to an equality or competition with himself. If he is an old acquaintance, he would keep you always where you were, under his feet to be trampled on: if a new one, he wonders he never heard of you before. As you become known, he expresses a greater contempt for you, and grows more captious and uneasy. The more you strive to merit his good word, the farther you are from it. Such characters will not only sneer at your well-meant endeavors, and keep silent as to your good qualities, but are out of countenance, "quite chop-fallen," if they find you have a cup of water, or a crust of bread. It is only when you are in a jail, starved or dead, that their exclusive pretensions are safe, or their Argus-eyed suspicions laid asleep. This is a true copy, nor is it taken from one sitting, or a single subject.—An author now-a-days, to succeed, must be something more than an author,—a nobleman, or rich plebeian: the simple literary character is not enough. "Such a poor forked animal," as a mere poet or philosopher turned loose upon public opinion, has no chance against the flocks of bats and owls that instantly assail him. It is name, it is wealth, it is title and influence that mollifies the tender-hearted Cerberus of criticism—first, by placing the honorary candidate for fame out of the reach of Grub-street malice; secondly, by holding out the prospect of a dinner or a vacant office to successful sycophancy. This is the reason why a certain Magazine praises Percy Bysshe Shelley, and vilifies "Johnny Keats:"* they know very well that they cannot ruin the one in fortune as well as in fame, but they may ruin the other in both, deprive him of a livelihood together with his good name, send him *to Coventry*, and into the Rules of a prison; and this is a double incitement to the exercise of their laudable and legitimate vocation. We do not hear that they plead the good-natured motive of the Editor of the Quarterly Review, that "they did it for his good," because some one, in consequence of that critic's abuse, had sent the author a present of five-and-twenty pounds! One of these writers went so far, in a sort of general profession of literary servility, as to declare broadly that there had been no great English poet, and that no one had a right to pretend to the character of a man of genius in this country, who was not of patrician birth—or connexions by marriage! This hook was well baited.

> These are the *doctrines* that enrich the shops,
> That pass with reputation through the land,
> And bring their authors an immortal name.

It is the sympathy of the public with the spite, jealousy, and irritable humors of the writers, that nourishes this disease in the public mind; this "embalms and spices to the April day again," what otherwise "the spital and the lazar-house would heave the gorge at!"

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* Written in June, 1820.

ESSAY XVIII.

Madame Pasta and Mademoiselle Mars.

I LIKED Mademoiselle Mars exceedingly well, till I saw Madame Pasta whom I liked so much better. The reason is, the one is the perfection of French, the other of natural acting. Madame Pasta is Italian, and she might be English—Mademoiselle Mars belongs emphatically to her country; the scene of her triumphs is Paris. She plays naturally too, but it is French nature. Let me explain. She has, it is true, none of the vices of the French theatre, its extravagance, its flutter, its grimace, and affectation, but her merit in these respects is as it were negative, and she seems to put an artificial restraint upon herself. There is still a pettiness, an attention to *minutiæ*, an etiquette, a mannerism about her acting: she does not give an entire loose to her feelings, or trust to the unpremeditated and habitual impulse of her situation. She has greater elegance, perhaps, and precision of style than Madame Pasta, but not half her boldness or grace. In short, everything she does is voluntary, instead of being spontaneous. It seems as if she might be acting from marginal directions to her part. When not speaking, she stands in general quite still. When she speaks, she extends first one hand and then the other, in a way that you can foresee every time she does so, or in which a machine might be elaborately constructed to develope different successive movements. When she enters, she advances in a straight line from the other end to the middle of the stage with the slight unvarying trip of her country-women, and then stops short, as if under the drill of a *fugal-man*. When she speaks, she articulates with perfect clearness and propriety, but it is the facility of a singer executing a difficult passage. The case is that of habit not of nature. Whatever she does, is right in the intention, and she takes care not to carry it too far; but she appears to say beforehand, "*This* I will do, I must not do *that*." Her acting is an inimitable study or consummate rehearsal of the part as a preparatory performance: she hardly yet appears to have assumed the character; something more is wanting, and that something you find in Madame Pasta. If Mademoiselle Mars has to smile, a slight and evanescent expression of pleasure passes across the surface of her face; twinkles in her eyelids, dimples her chin, compresses her lips, and plays on each feature: when Madame Pasta smiles, a beam of joy seems to have struck upon her heart, and to irradiate her countenance. Her whole face is bathed and melted in expression, instead of its glancing from particular points. When she speaks, it is in music. When she moves, it is without thinking whether she is graceful or not. When she weeps, it is a fountain of tears, not a few trickling drops, that glitter and vanish the instant after. The French themselves admire Madame Pasta's acting (who indeed can help it?) but they go away thinking how much one of her simple movements would be improved by their extravagant gesticulations, and that her noble, natural expression would be the better for having twenty airs of mincing affectation added to it. In her Nina there is a listless vacancy, an awkward grace, a want of *bienséance*, that is like a child or a changeling, and that no French actress would venture upon for a moment, lest she should be suspected of a want of *esprit* or of *bon mien*. A French actress always plays before the court; she is always in the presence of an audience, with whom she first settles her personal pretensions by a significant hint or side-glance, and then as much nature and simplicity as you please. Poor Madame Pasta thinks no more of the audience than Nina herself would, if she could be observed by stealth, or than the fawn that wounded comes to drink, or the flower that droops in the sun or wags its sweet head in the gale. She gives herself entirely up to the impression of the part, loses her power over herself, is led away by her feelings either to an expression of stupor or of artless joy, borrows beauty from deformity, charms unconsciously, and is transformed into the very being she represents. She does not act the character—she *is* it, looks it, breathes it. She does not study for an effect, but strives to possess herself of the feeling which should dictate what she is to do, and which gives birth to the proper degree of grace, dignity, ease, or force. She makes no point all the way through, but her whole style and manner is in perfect keeping, as if she were really a love-sick, care-crazed maiden, occupied with one deep sorrow, and who had no other idea or interest in the world. This alone is true nature and true art. The rest is sophistical; and French art is not free from the imputation; it never places an implicit faith in nature, but always mixes up a certain portion of art, that is of consciousness and affectation with it. I shall illustrate this subject from a passage in Shakspeare.

> "*Polixenes.*—Shepherdess,
> (A fair one are you) well you fit our ages
> With flow'rs of winter.
> *Perdita.*—Sir, the year growing ancient,
> Nor yet on summer's death, nor on the birth
> Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o' th' season
> Are our carnations and streak'd gilliflowers,
> Which some call nature's bastards; of that kind
> Our rustic garden's barren, and I care not
> To get slips of them.
> *Polix.*—Wherefore, gentle maiden,
> Do you neglect them?
> *Perdita.*—For I have heard it said,
> There is an art which in their piedness shares
> With great creating nature.
> *Polix.*—Say, there be,
> Yet nature is made better by no mean,
> But nature makes that mean; so o'er that art,
> Which you say adds to nature, is an art,
> That nature makes; you see, sweet maid, we marry
> A gentle scion to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race. This is an art,
> Which does mend nature; change it rather; but
> The art itself is nature.
> *Perdita.*—So it is.
> *Polix.*—Then make your garden rich in gilliflowers,
> And do not call them bastards.
> *Perdita.*—I'll not put
> A dibble in earth, to set one slip of them;
> No more than, were I painted, I should wish
> This youth to say, 'twere well; and only therefore
> Desire to breed by me."—*Winter's Tale, Act IV.*

Madame Pasta appears to be of Perdita's mind in respect to her acting, and I applaud her resolution heartily. We English are charged unjustly with wishing to disparage the French: we cannot help it; there is a natural antipathy between the two nations. Thus unable to deny their theatrical merit, we are said insidiously to have invented the appellation, *French nature*, to explain away or throw a stigma on their most successful exertions:

—— "Though that their art be nature,
We throw such changes of vexation on it,
As it may lose some color."

The English are a heavy people, and the most like a stone of all others. The French are a lively people, and more like a feather. They are easily moved and by slight causes, and each part of the impression has its separate effect: the English, if they are moved at all (which is a work of time and difficulty), are moved altogether, or in mass, and the impression, if it takes root, strikes deep and spreads wide, involving a number of other impressions in it. If a fragment of a rock wrenched from its place rolls slowly at first, gathers strength and fury as it proceeds, tears up everything in its way, and thunders to the plain below, there is something noble and imposing in the sight, for it is an image of our own headlong passions, and the increasing vehemence of our desires. But we hate to see a feather launched into the air and driven back on the hand that throws it, shifting its course with every puff of wind, and carried no farther by the strongest than by the slightest impulse. It is provoking (is it not?) to see the strength of the blow always defeated by the very insignificance and want of resistance in the object, and the impulse received never answering to the impulse given. It is the very same fluttering, fidgetting, tantalizing, inconsequential, ridiculous process that annoys us in the French character. There seems no *natural* correspondence between objects and feelings, between things and words. By yielding to every impulse at once, nothing produces a powerful or permanent impression; nothing produces an aggregate impression, for every part tells separately. Every idea turns off to something else, or back upon itself; there is no progress made, no blind impulse, no accumulation of imagination with circumstances, no absorption of all other feelings in one overwhelming one, that is, no keeping, no *momentum*, no integrity, no totality, no inflexible sincerity of purpose; and it is this resolution of the sentiments into their detached points and first impressions, so that they do not take an entire and involuntary hold of them, but either they can throw them off from their lightness, or escape from them by reason of their minuteness, that we English complain of as French nature or a want of nature, for by nature is only meant that the mind identifies itself with something so as to be no longer master of itself, and the French mind never identifies itself with anything, but always has its own consciousness, its own affectation, its own gratification, its own slippery inconstancy or impertinent prolixity interposed between the object and the impression. It is this theatrical or artificial nature with which we cannot and will not sympathize, because it circumscribes the truth of things and the capacities of the human mind within the petty round of vanity, indifference, and physical sensations, stunts the growth of imagination, effaces the broad light of nature, and requires us to look at all things through the prism of their petulance and self-conceit. The French in a word leave *sincerity* out of their nature (not moral but imaginative sincerity), cut down the varieties of feeling to their own narrow and superficial standard, and having clipped and adulterated the current coin of expression, would pass it off as sterling gold. We cannot make an exchange with them. They are affected by things in a different manner from us, not in a different degree; and a mutual understanding is hopeless. We have no dislike to foreigners as such: on the contrary, a rage for foreign artists and works of art is one of our foibles. But if we give up our national pride, it must be to our taste and understandings. Nay, we adopt the manners and the fashions of the French, their dancing and their cooking,—not their music, not their painting, not their poetry, not their metaphysics, not their style of acting. If we are sensible of our own stupidity, we cannot admire *their* vivacity; if we are sick of our own awkwardness, we like it better than their grace; we cannot part with our grossness for their refinement; if we would be glad to have our lumpish clay animated, it must be with true Prome thean heat, not with painted phosphorus: they are not the Frankensteins that must perform this feat. Who among us in reading Schiller's Robbers for the first time ever asked if it was German or not? Who in reading Klopstock's Messiah did not object that it was German, not because it was German, but because it was heavy; that is, because the imagination and the heart do not act like a machine, so as to be wound up or let down by the pulleys of the will? Do not the French complain (and complain justly), that a picture is English, when it is coarse and unfinished, and leaves out the details which are one part of nature? Do not the English remonstrate against this defect too, and endeavor to cure it? But it may be said we relish Schiller, because he is barbarous, violent, and like Shakspeare. We have the Cartoons of Raphael then, and Elgin marbles; and we profess to admire and understand these too, and I think without any affectation. The reason is that there is no affectation in them. We like those noble outlines of the human face at Hampton Court; the sustained dignity of the expression; the broad, ample folds of the drapery; the bold, massive limbs; there is breath and motion in them, and we would willingly be so transformed and spiritualized: but we do not want to have our heavy, stupid faces frittered away into a number of glittering points or transfixed into a smooth petrifaction on French canvas. Our faces, if wanting in expression, have a settled purpose in them; are as solid as they are stupid; and we are at least flesh and blood. We also like the sway of the limbs and negligent grandeur of the Elgin marbles; in spite of their huge weight and manly strength, they have the buoyancy of a wave of the sea, with all the ease and softness of flesh: they fall into attitudes of themselves: but if they were put into attitudes by the genius of Opera-dancing, we should feel no disposition to imitate or envy them, any more than we do the Zephyr and Flora graces of French statuary. We prefer a single head of Chantry's to a quarry of French sculpture. The English are a modest people, except in comparing themselves with their next neighbors, and nothing provokes their pride in this case, so much as the self-sufficiency of the latter. When Madame Pasta walks in upon the stage, and looks about her with the same unconsciousness or timid wonder as the young stag in the forest;

when she moves her limbs as carelessly as a tree its branches; when she unfolds one of her divine expressions of countenance, which reflect the inmost feelings of the soul, as the calm, deep lake reflects the face of heaven; do we not sufficiently admire her, do we not wish her ours, and feel, with the same cast of thought and character, a want of glow, of grace, and ease in the expression of what we feel? We bow, like Guiderius and Arviragus in the cave when they saw Imogen, as to a thing superior. On the other hand, when Mademoiselle Mars comes on the stage, something in the manner of a fantoccini figure slid along on a wooden frame, and making directly for the point at which her official operations commence—when her face is puckered into a hundred little expressions like the wrinkles on the skin of a bowl of cream, set in a window to cool, her eyes peering out with an ironical meaning, her nose pointing it, and her lips confirming it with a dry pressure—we admire indeed, we are delighted, we may envy, but we do not sympathize or very well know what to make of it. We are not electrified, as in the former instance, but *animal-magnetised*.* We can manage pretty well with any one feeling or expression (like a clown that must be taught his letters one at a time) if it keeps on in the same even course, that expands and deepens by degrees, but we are distracted and puzzled, or at best only amused with that sort of expression which is hardly itself for two moments together, that shifts from point to point, that seems to have no place to rest on, no impulse to urge it forward, and might as well be twenty other things at the same time—where tears come so easily they can hardly be real, where smiles are so playful they appear put on, where you cannot tell what you are to believe, for the parties themselves do not know whether they are in jest or earnest, where the whole tone is ironical, conventional, and where the difference between nature and art is nearly imperceptible. This is what we mean by French nature, *viz.*, that the feelings and ideas are so slight and discontinuous that they can be changed for others like a dress or vizor; or else, to make up for want of truth and breadth, are caricatured into a mask. This is the defect of their tragedy, and the defect and excellence of their comedy; the one is a pompous abortion, the other a *fac-simile* of life, almost too close to be agreeable. A French comic actor might be supposed to have left his shop for half an hour to show himself upon a stage—there is no difference, worth speaking of, between the man and the actor—whether on the stage or at home, he is equally full of gesticulation, equally voluble, and without meaning—as their tragic actors are solemn puppets, moved by rules, pulled by wires, and with their mouths stuffed with rant and bombast. This is the harm that can be said of them: they themselves are doubtless best acquainted with the good, and are not too diffident to tell it. Though other people abuse them, they can still praise themselves! I once knew a French lady who said all manner of good things and forgot them the next moment; who maintained an argument with great wit and eloquence, and presently after changed sides, without knowing that she had done so; who invented a story and believed it on the spot; who wept herself and made you weep with the force of her descriptions, and suddenly drying her eyes, laughed at you for looking grave. Is not this like acting? Yet it was not affected in her, but natural, involuntary, incorrigible. The hurry and excitement of her natural spirits was like a species of intoxication, or she resembled a child in thoughtlessness and incoherence. She was a Frenchwoman. It was nature, but nature that had nothing to do with truth or consistency.

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* Even her *j'existe* in Valeria (when she first acquires the use of sight) is pointed like an epigram, and *put in italics*, like a technical or metaphysical distinction, instead of being a pure effusion of joy. Accordingly a French pit-critic took up the phrase, insisting that *to exist* was common to all things, and asked what the expression was in the original German. This treatment of passion is *topical* and extraneous, and seldom strikes at the seat of the disorder, the heart.

In one of the Paris Journals lately, there was a criticism on two pictures by Girodet of Bonchamps and Cathelineau, Vendean chiefs. The paper is well written, and points out the defects of the portraits very fairly and judiciously. These persons are there called "Illustrious Vendeans." The dead dogs of 1812 are the illustrious Vendeans of 1824. Monsieur Chateaubriand will have it so, and the French are too polite a nation to contradict him. They split on this rock of complaisance, surrendering every principle to the fear of giving offence, as we do on the opposite one of party-spirit and rancorous hostility, sacrificing the best of causes, and our best friends to the desire of giving offence, to the indulgence of our spleen, and of an ill-tongue. We apply a degrading appellation, or bring an opprobrious charge against an individual; and such is our tenaciousness of the painful and disagreeable, so fond are we of brooding over grievances, so incapable are our imaginations of raising themselves above the lowest scurrility or the dirtiest abuse, that should the person attacked come out an angel from the contest, the prejudice against him remains nearly the same as if the charge had been fully proved. An unpleasant association has been created, and this is too delightful an exercise of the understanding with the English public easily to be parted with. John Bull would as soon give up an estate as a bug-bear. Having been once gulled, they are not soon *ungulled*. They are too knowing for that. Nay, they resent the attempt to undeceive them as an injury. The French apply a brilliant epithet to the most vulnerable characters; and thus gloss over a life of treachery or infamy. With them the immediate or last impression is everything; with us, the first, if it is sufficiently strong and gloomy, never wears out! The French critic observes that M. Girodet has given General Bonchamps, though in a situation of great difficulty and danger, a calm and even smiling air, and that the portrait of Cathelineau, instead of a hero, looks only like an angry peasant. In fact, the lips in the first portrait are made of marmalade, the complexion is cosmetic, and the smile ineffably engaging; while the eye of the peasant Cathelineau darts a beam of light, such as no eye, however illustrious, was ever illumined with. But so it is, the Senses, like a favorite lap-dog, are pampered and indulged at any expense: the Imagination, like a gaunt hound, is starved and driven away. Danger and death, and ferocious courage and stern fortitude, however the subject may exact them, are uncourtly topics and kept out of sight: but smiling lips and glistening eyes are pleasing objects, and there you find them. *The style of portrait requires it*. It is of this varnish and glitter of sentiment that we complain (perhaps it is no business of ours) as what must for ever intercept the true feeling and genuine rendering of nature in French art, as what makes it spurious and counterfeit, and strips it of simplicity, force and grandeur. Whatever pleases, whatever strikes, holds out a temptation to the French artist too strong to be resisted, and there is too great a sympathy in the public mind with this view of the subject, to quarrel with or severely criticise what is so congenial with its own feelings. A premature and superficial sensibility is the grave of French genius and of French taste. Beyond the momentary impulse of a lively organization, all the rest is mechanical and pedantic ; they give you rules and theories for truth and nature, the Unities for poetry, and the dead body for the living soul of art. They color a Greek statue ill and call it a picture : they paraphrase a Greek tragedy, and overload it with long-winded speeches, and they think they have a national drama of their own. Any other people would be ashamed of such preposterous pretensions. In invention, they do not get beyond models ; in imitation, beyond details. Their microscopic vision hinders them from seeing nature. I observed two young students the other day near the top of Montmartre, making oil sketches of a ruinous hovel in one corner of the road. Paris lay below, glittering grey and gold (like a spider's web) in the setting sun, which shot its slant rays upon their shining canvas, and they were busy in giving the finishing touches. The little outhouse was in itself picturesque enough : it was covered with moss, which hung down in a sort of drooping form as the rain had streamed down it, and the walls were loose and crumbling in pieces. Our artists had repaired everything : not a stone was out of its place : no traces were left of the winter's flaw in the pendent moss. One would think the bricklayer and gardener had been regularly set to work to do away everything like sentiment or keeping in the object before them. Oh, Paris ! it was indeed on this thy weak side (thy inability to connect any two ideas into one) that thy barbarous and ruthless foes entered in !—

The French have a great dislike to anything obscure. They cannot bear to suppose for a moment there should be anything they do not understand : they are shockingly afraid of being *mystified*. Hence they have no idea either of mental or aerial perspective. Everything must be distinctly made out and in the foreground ; for if it is not so clear that they can take it up bit by bit, it is wholly lost upon them, and they turn away as from an unmeaning blank. This is the cause of the stiff, unnatural look of their portraits. No allowance is made for the veil that shade as well as an oblique position casts over the different parts of the face; every feature, and every part of every feature is given with the same flat effect, and it is owing to this perverse fidelity of detail, that that which is literally true, is naturally false. The side of a face seen in perspective does not present so many markings as the one that meets your eye full; but if it is put into the *vice* of French portrait, wrenched round by incorrigible affectation and conceit (that insist upon knowing all that is there, and set it down formally, though it is not to be seen), what can be the result, but that the portrait will look like a head stuck in a vice, will be flat, hard, and finished, will have the appearance of reality and at the same time look like paint; in short, will be a French portrait? That is, the artist, from a pettiness of view and want of more enlarged and liberal notions of art, comes forward not to represent nature, but like an impertinent commentator to explain what she has left in doubt, to insist on that which she passes over or touches only slightly, to throw a critical light on what she casts into shade, and to pick out the details of what she blends into masses. I wonder they allow the existence of the term *clair-obscur* at all, but it is a word; and a word is a thing they can repeat and remember. A French gentleman formerly asked me what I thought of a landscape in their Exhibition. I said that I thought it too clear. He made answer that he should never have conceived that to be possible. I replied, that what I meant was, that the parts of the several objects were made out with too nearly equal distinctness all over the picture; that the leaves of the trees in the shadow were as distinct as those in light, the branches of the trees at a distance as plain as of those near. The perspective arose only from the diminution of objects, and there was no interposition of air. I said, one could not see the leaves of a tree a mile off, but this, I added, appertained to a question in metaphysics. He shook his head, thinking that a young Englishman could know as little of abstruse philosophy as of fine art, and no more was said. I owe to this gentleman (whose name was Merimee, and who I understand is still living), a grateful sense of many friendly attentions and many useful suggestions, and I take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations.

Some one was observing of Madame Pasta's acting, that its chief merit consisted in its being natural. To which it was replied, "Not so, for that there was an ugly and a handsome nature." There is an old proverb, that "Home is home, be it never so homely:" and so it may be said of nature; that whether ugly or handsome, it is nature still. Besides beauty there is truth, which is always one principal thing. It doubles the effect of beauty, which is mere affectation without it, and even reconciles us to deformity. Nature, the truth of nature in imitation, denotes a given object, a "foregone conclusion" in reality, to which the artist is to conform in his copy. In nature real objects exist, real causes act, which are only supposed to act in art; and it is in the subordination of the uncertain and superficial combinations of fancy to the more stable and powerful law of reality that the perfection of art consists. A painter may arrange fine colors on his palette; but if he merely does this, he does nothing. It is accidental or arbitrary. The difficulty and the charm of the combination begins with the truth of imitation, that is, with the resemblance to a given object in nature, or in other words, with the strength, coherence, and justness of our impressions, which must be verified by a reference to a known and determinate class of objects as the test. Art is so far the development or the communication of knowledge, but there can be no knowledge unless it be of some given or standard object which exists independently of the representation and bends the will to an obedience to it. The strokes of the pencil are what the artist pleases, are mere idleness and caprice without meaning, unless they point to nature. Then they are right or wrong, true or false, as they follow in her steps and copy her style. Art must anchor in nature, or it is the sport of every breath of folly. Natural objects convey given or intelligible ideas which art embodies and represents, or it represents nothing, is a mere chimera or bubble; and, farther, natural objects or events cause certain feelings, in expressing which art manifests its power, and genius its prerogative. The capacity of expressing these movements of passion is in proportion to the power with which they are felt; and this is the same as sympathy with the human mind placed in actual situations, and influenced by the real causes that are supposed to act. Genius is the power which equalizes or identifies the imagination with the reality or with nature. Certain events happening to us naturally produce joy, others sorrow, and these feelings, if excessive, lead to other consequences, such as stupor or ecstasy, and express themselves by certain signs in the countenance or voice or gestures; and we admire and applaud an actress accordingly, who gives these tones and gestures as they would follow in the order of things, because we then know that her mind has been affected in like manner, that she enters deeply into the resources of nature, and understands the riches of the human heart. For nothing else can impel and stir her up to the imitation of the truth. The way in which real causes act upon the feelings is not arbitrary, is not fanciful; it is as true as it is powerful and unforeseen; the effects can only be similar when the exciting causes have a correspondence with each other, and there is nothing like feeling *but* feeling. The sense of joy can alone produce the smile of joy; and in proportion to the sweetness, the unconsciousness, and the expansion of the last, we may be sure is the fulness and sincerity of the heart from which it proceeds. The elements of joy at least are there, in their integrity and perfection. The death or absence of a beloved object is nothing as a word, as a mere passing thought, till it comes to be dwelt upon, and we begin to feel the revulsion, the long dreary separation, the stunning sense of the blow to our happiness, as we should in reality. The power of giving this sad and bewildering effect of sorrow on the stage is derived from the force of sympathy with what we should feel in reality. That is, a great histrionic genius is one that approximates the effects of words, or of supposed situations on the mind, most nearly to the deep and vivid effect of real and inevitable ones. Joy produces tears: the violence of passion turns to childish weakness; but this could not be foreseen by study, nor taught by rules, nor mimicked by observation. Natural acting is therefore fine, because it implies and calls forth the most varied and strongest feelings that the supposed characters and circumstances can possibly give birth to: it reaches the height of the subject. The conceiving or entering into a part in this sense is everything: the acting follows easily and of course.

But art without nature is a nickname, a word without meaning, a conclusion without any premises to go upon. The beauty of Madame Pasta's acting in Nina proceeds upon this principle. It is not what she does at any particular juncture, but she seems to be the character, and to be incapable of divesting herself of it. This is true acting: anything else is playing tricks, may be clever and ingenious, is French Opera-dancing, recitation, heroics or hysterics—but it is not true nature or true art.

ESSAY XIX.

Sir Walter Scott, Racine, and Shakspeare

The argument at the end of the last Essay may possibly serve to throw some light on the often agitated and trite question, Whether we receive more pleasure from an Opera or a Tragedy, from the words or the pantomime of a fine dramatic representation? A musician I can conceive to declare, sincerely and conscientiously, in favor of the Opera over the theatre, for he has made it his chief or exclusive study. But I have heard some literary persons do the same; and in them it appears to me to be more the affectation of candor, than candor itself. "The still small voice is wanting" in this preference; for however lulling or overpowering the effect of music may be at the time, we return to nature at last; it is there we find solidity and repose, and it is from this that the understanding ought to give its casting vote. Indeed there is a sense of reluctance and a sort of critical remorse in the opposite course as in giving up an old prejudice or a friend to whom we are under considerable obligations; but this very feeling of the conquest or sacrifice of a prejudice is a tacit proof that we are wrong; for it arises only out of the strong interest excited in the course of time, and involved in the nature and principle of the drama.

Words are the signs which point out and define the objects of the highest import to the human mind; and speech is the habitual, and as it were most *intimate* mode of expressing those signs, the one with which our practical and serious associations are most in unison. To give a deliberate verdict on the other side of the question seems, therefore, effeminate and unjust. A rose is delightful to the smell, a pine-apple to the taste. The nose and the palate, if their opinion were asked, might very fairly give it in favor of these against any rival sentiment; but the head and the heart cannot be expected to become accomplices against them selves. We cannot pay a worse compliment to any pleasure or pursuit than to surrender the pretensions of some other to it. Everything stands best on its own foundation. A sound expresses, for the most part, nothing but itself; a word expresses a million of sounds. The thought or impression of the moment is one thing, and it may be more or less delightful; but beyond this, it may relate to the fate or events of a whole life, and it is this moral and intellectual perspective that words convey in its full signification and extent, and that gives a proportionable superiority in weight, in compass, and dignity to the denunciations of the tragic Muse. The language of the understanding is necessary to a rational being. Man is dumb and prone to the earth without it. It is that which opens the vista of our past or future years. Otherwise a cloud is upon it, like the mist of the morning, like a veil of roses, an exhalation of sweet sounds, or rich distilled perfumes; no matter what—it is the nerve or organ that is chiefly touched, the sense that is wrapped in ecstasy or waked to madness; the man remains unmoved, torpid, and listless, blind to causes and consequences, which he can never remain satisfied without knowing, but seems shut up in a cell of ignorance, baffled and confounded. Sounds without meaning are like a glare of light without objects; or, an Opera is to a Tragedy what a transparency is to a picture. We are delighted because we are dazzled. But words are a key to the affections. They not only excite feelings, but they point to the *why* and *wherefore*. Causes march before them, and consequences follow after them. They are links in the chain of the universe, and the grappling-irons that bind us to it. They open the gates of Paradise, and reveal the abyss of human wo.

> "Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
> Die in a word; such is the breath of kings."

But in this respect all men who have the use of speech are kings. It is words that constitute all but the present moment, but the present object. They may not and they do not give the whole of any train of impressions which they suggest; but they alone answer in any degree to the truth of things, unfold the dark labyrinth of fate, or unravel the web of the human heart; for they alone describe things in the order and relation in which they happen in human life. Men do not dance or sing through life; or an Opera or a ballet would "come home to the bosoms and business of men," in the same manner that a Tragedy or Comedy does. As it is, they do not piece on to our ordinary existence, nor go to enrich our habitual reflections. We wake from them as from a drunken dream, or a last night's debauch; and think of them no more, till the actual impression is repeated. On the other hand, pantomime action (as an exclusive and new species of the drama) is like tragedy obtruncated and thrown on the ground, gasping for utterance and struggling for breath. It is a display of the powers of art, I should think more wonderful than satisfactory. There is a stifling sensation about it. It does not throw off "the perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart," but must rather aggravate and tighten the pressure.

> "Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak,
> Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break."

This is perhaps the cause of our backwardness to admit a comparison between Mrs. Siddons and Palarini, between Shakspeare and Vigano. Poetry and words speak a language proper to humanity; every other is comparatively foreign to it. The distinction here laid down is important, and should be kept sacred. Even in speaking a foreign language, words lose half their meaning, and are no longer an echo to the sense; virtue becomes a cant-term, vice sounds like an agreeable novelty, and ceases to shock. How much more must this effect happen, if we lay aside speech (our distinguishing faculty) altogether, or try to "gabble most brutishly," measure good and evil by the steps of a dance, and breathe our souls away in dying swan-like symphonies! But it may be asked, how does all this affect my favorite art of painting? I leave somebody else to answer that question. It will be a good exercise for their ingenuity, if not for their ingenuousness.

I proceed to the more immediate object of this Essay, which was to distinguish between the talents of Sir Walter Scott, Racine, and Shakspeare. The subject occurred to me from some conversation with a French lady, who entertains a project of introducing Shakspeare in France. As I demurred to the probability of this alteration in the national taste, she endeavored to overcome my despondency by several lively arguments, and among other things, urged the instantaneous and universal success of the Scotch Novels among all ranks and conditions of the French people. As Shakspeare had been performing quarantine among them for a century and a half to no purpose, I thought this circumstance rather proved the difference in the genius of the two writers than a change in the taste of the nation. Madame B. stoutly maintained the contrary opinion: and when an Englishman argues with a Frenchwoman he has very considerable odds against him. The only advantage you have in this case is that you can plead inability to express yourself properly, and may be supposed to have a meaning where you have none. An eager manner will supply the place of distinct ideas, and you have only not to surrender in form, to appear to come off with flying colors. The not being able to make others understand me, however, prevents me from understanding myself, and I was by no means satisfied with the reasons I alleged in the present instance. I tried to mend them the next day, and the following is the result. It was supposed at one time that the genius of the Author of Waverley was confined to Scotland; that his Novels and Tales were a bundle of national prejudices and local traditions, and that his superiority would desert him, the instant he attempted to cross the Border. He made the attempt, however, and contrary to these unfavorable prognostics, succeeded. Ivanhoe, if not equal to the very best of the Scotch Novels, is very nearly so; and the scenery and manners are truly English. In Quentin Durward, again, he made a descent upon France, and gained new laurels, instead of losing his former ones. This seemed to bespeak a versatility of talent and a plastic power, which in the first instance had been called in question. A Scotch mist had been suspected to hang its mystery over the page; his imagination was borne up on Highland superstitions and obsolete traditions, "sailing with supreme dominion" through the murky regions of ignorance and barbarism; and if ever at a loss, his invention was eked out and *got a cast* by means of ancient documents and the records of criminal jurisprudence or fanatic rage. The Black Dwarf was a paraphrase of the current anecdotes of David Ritchie, without any additional point or interest, and the story of Effie Deans had slept for a century in the law reports and depositions relative to the Heart of Mid-Lothian. To be sure, nothing could be finer or truer to nature; for the human heart, whenever or however it is wakened, has a stirring power in it, and as to the truth of nature, nothing can be more like nature than facts, if you know where to find them. But as to sheer invention, there appeared to be about as much as there is in the getting up the melo-dramatic representation of the Maid and the Magpie from the *Causes Célèbres*. The invention is much greater and the effect is not less in Mrs. Inchbald's NATURE AND ART, where there is nothing that can have been given *in evidence* but the Trial-Scene near the end, and even that is not a legal anecdote, but a pure dramatic fiction. Before I proceed, I may as well dwell on this point a little. The heroine of the story, the once innocent and beautiful Hannah, is brought by a series of misfortunes and crimes (the effect of a misplaced attachment) to be tried for her life at the Old Bailey, and as her Judge, her former lover and seducer, is about to pronounce sentence upon her, she calls out in an agony—"Oh! not from YOU!" and as the Hon. Mr. Norwynne proceeds to finish his solemn address, falls in a swoon, and is taken senseless from the bar. I know nothing in the world so affecting as this. Now if Mrs. Inchbald had merely found this story in the Newgate-Calendar, and transplanted it into a novel, I conceive that her merit in point of genius (not to say feeling) would be less than if having all the other circumstances given, and the apparatus ready, and this exclamation alone left blank, she had filled it up from her own heart that is, from an intense conception of the situation of the parties, so that from the harrowing recollections passing through the mind of the poor girl so circumstanced, this uncontrollable gush of feeling would burst from her lips. Just such I apprehend, generally speaking, is the amount of the difference between the genius of Shakspeare and that of Sir Walter Scott. It is the difference between *originality* and the want of it, between writing and transcribing. Almost all the finest scenes and touches, the great master-strokes in Shakspeare, are such as must have belonged to the class of invention, where the secret lay between him and his own heart, and the power exerted is in adding to the given materials and working something out of them: in the Author of Waverley, not all, but the principal and characteristic beauties are such as may and do belong to the class of compilation, that is, consist in bringing the materials together and leaving them to produce their own effect. Sir Walter Scott is much such a writer as the Duke of Wellington is a General (I am profaning a number of great names in this article by unequal comparisons). The one gets a hundred thousand men together, and wisely leaves it to them to fight out the battle, for if he meddled with it, he might spoil sport: the other gets an innumerable quantity of facts together, and lets them tell their own story, as best they may. The facts are stubborn in the last instance as the men are in the first, and in neither case is *the broth spoiled by the cook.* This abstinence from interfering with their resources, lest they should defeat their own success, shows great modesty and self-knowledge in the compiler of romances and the leader of armies, but little boldness or inventiveness of genius. We begin to measure Shakspeare's height from the superstructure of passion and fancy he has raised out of his subject and story, on which too rests the triumphal arch of his fame: if we were to take away the subject and story, the portrait and history from the Scotch Novels, no great deal would be left worth talking about.

No one admires or delights in the Scotch Novels more than I do; but at the same time when I hear it asserted that his mind is of the same class with Shakspeare's, or that he imitates nature in the same way, I confess I cannot assent to it. No two things appear to me more different. Sir Walter is an imitator of nature and nothing more; but I think Shakspeare is infinitely more than this. The creative principle is everywhere restless and redundant in Shakspeare, both as it relates to the invention of feeling and imagery; in the Author of Waverley it lies for the most part dormant, sluggish and unused. Sir Walter's mind is full of information, but the "*o'er-informing power*" is not there. Shakspeare's spirit, like fire, shines through him: Sir Walter's like a stream, reflects surrounding objects. It is true, he has shifted the scene from Scotland into England and France, and the manners and characters are strikingly English and French; but this does not prove that they are not local, and that they are not bor rowed, as well as the scenery and costume, from comparatively obvious and mechanical sources. Nobody from reading Shakspeare would know (except from the *Dramatis Personæ*) that Lear was an English king. He is merely a king and a father. The ground is common: but what a well of tears has he dug out of it! The tradition is nothing, or a foolish one. There are no data in history to go upon; no advantage is taken of costume, no acquaintance with geography or architecture or dialect is necessary: but there is an old tradition, human nature—an old temple, the human mind—and Shakspeare walks into it and looks about him with a lordly eye, and seizes on the sacred spoils as his own. The story is a thousand or two years old, and yet the tragedy has no smack of antiquarianism in it. I should like very well to see Sir Walter giving us a tragedy of this kind, a huge "globose" of sorrow, swinging round in mid-air, independent of time, place, and circumstance, sustained by its own weight and motion, and not propped up by the levers of custom, or patched up with quaint, old-fashioned dresses, or set off by grotesque backgrounds or rusty armor, but in which the mere paraphernalia and accessories were left out of the question, and nothing but the soul of passion and the pith of imagination was to be found. "A Dukedom to a beggarly *denier*," he would make nothing of it. Does this prove he has done nothing, or that he has not done the greatest things? No, but that he is not like Shakspeare. For instance, when Lear says, "The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, see they bark at me!" there is no old Chronicle of the line of Brute, no *black-letter* broad-side, no tattered ballad, no vague rumor, in which this exclamation is registered; there is nothing romantic, quaint, mysterious in the objects introduced: the illustration is borrowed from the commonest and most casual images in nature, and yet it is this very circumstance that lends its extreme force to the expression of his grief by showing that even the lowest things in creation and the last you would think of had in his imagination turned against him. All nature was, as he supposed, in a conspiracy against him, and the most trivial and insignificant creatures concerned in it were the most striking proofs of its malignity and extent. It is the depth of passion, however, or of the poet's sympathy with it, that distinguishes this character of torturing familiarity in them, invests them with corresponding importance, and suggests them by the force of contrast. It is not that certain images are surcharged with a prescriptive influence over the imagination from known and existing prejudices, so that to approach or even mention them is sure to excite a pleasing awe and horror in the mind (the effect in this case is mostly mechanical)—the whole sublimity of the passage is from the weight of passion thrown into it, and this is the poet's own doing. This is not trick, but genius. Meg Merrilies on her death-bed says, "Lay my head to the East!" Nothing can be finer or more thrilling than this in its way; but the author has little to do with it. It is an Oriental superstition; it is a proverbial expression; it is part of the gibberish (sublime though it be) of her gipsey clan!—"Nothing but his unkind daughters could have brought him to this pass." This is not a cant-phrase, nor the fragment of an old legend, nor a mysterious spell, nor the butt-end of a wizard's denunciation. It is the mere natural ebullition of passion, urged nearly to madness, and that will admit no other cause of dire misfortune but its own, which swallows up all other griefs. The force of despair hurries the imagination over the boundary of fact and common sense, and renders the transition sublime; but there is no precedent or authority for it, except in the general nature of the human mind. I think, but am not sure that Sir Walter Scott has imitated this turn of reflection, by making Madge Wildfire ascribe Jenny Deans's uneasiness to the loss of her baby, which had unsettled her own brain. Again, Lear calls on the Heavens to take his part, for "they are old like him." Here there is nothing to prop up the image but the strength of passion, confounding the infirmity of age with the stability of the firmament, and equalling the complainant, through the sense of suffering and wrong, with the Majesty of the Highest. This finding out a parallel between the most unlike objects, because the individual would wish to find one to support the sense of his own misery and helplessness, is truly Shakspearian; it is an instinctive law of our nature, and the genuine inspiration of the Muse. Racine (but let me not anticipate) would make him pour out three hundred verses of lamentation for his loss of kingdom, his feebleness, and his old age, coming to the same conclusion at the end of every third couplet, instead of making him grasp at once at the Heavens for support. The witches in Macbeth are traditional, preternatural personages; and there Sir Walter would have left them after making what use of them he pleased as a sort of Gothic machinery. Shakspeare makes something more of them, and adds to the mystery by explaining it.

> "The earth hath bubbles as the water hath,
> And these are of them."

We have their physiognomy too—

> ———" and enjoin'd silence,
> By each at once her choppy finger laying
> Upon her skinny lip."

And the mode of their disappearance is thus described—

> " And then they melted into thin air."

What an idea is here conveyed of silence and vacancy! The geese of Micklestane Muir (the country-woman and her flock of geese turned into stone) in the Black Dwarf, are a fine and petrifying metamorphosis; but it is the tradition of the country and no more. Sir Walter has told us nothing farther of it than the first clown whom we might ask concerning it. I do not blame him for that, though I cannot give him credit for what he has not done. The poetry of the novel is a *fixture* of the spot. Meg Merrilies I also allow, with all possible good-will, to be a most romantic and astounding personage; yet she is a little melodramatic. Her exits and entrances are pantomimic, and her long red cloak, her elf-locks, the rock on which she stands, and th white cloud behind her are, or might be made, the property of a theatre. Shakspeare's witches are nearly exploded on the stage. Their broomsticks are left; their metaphysics are gone, buried five editions deep in Captain Medwin's Conversations! The passion in Othello is made out of nothing but itself; there is no external machinery to help it on; its highest intermediate agent is an old-fashioned pocket-handkerchief. Yet "there's magic in the web" of thoughts and feelings, done after the commonest pattern of human life. The power displayed in it is that of intense passion and powerful intellect, wielding every-day events, and imparting its force to them, not swayed or carried along by them as in a go-cart. The splendor is that of genius darting out its forked flame on whatever comes in its way, and kindling and melting it in the furnace of affection, whether it be flax or iron. The coloring, the form, the motion, the combination of objects depend on the predisposition of the mind, moulding nature to its own purposes; in Sir Walter the mind is as wax to circumstances, and owns no other impress. Shakspeare is a half-worker with nature. Sir Walter is like a man who has got a romantic spinning-jenny, which he has only to set a going, and it does his work for him much better and faster than he can do it for himself. He lays an embargo on "all appliances and means to boot," on history, tradition, local scenery, costume and manners, and makes his characters chiefly up of these. Shakspeare seizes only on the ruling passion, and miraculously evolves all the rest from it. The eagerness of desire suggests every possible event that can irritate or thwart it, foresees all obstacles, catches at every trifle, clothes itself with imagination, and tantalises itself with hope; "sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt," starts at a phantom, and makes the universe tributary to it, and the plaything of its fancy. There is none of this over-weening importunity of the imagination in the Author of Waverley; he does his work well, but in another-guess manner. His imagination is a matter-of-fact imagination. To return to Othello. Take the celebrated dialogue in the third act. "'Tis common." There is nothing but the writhings and contortions of the heart, probed by affliction's point, as the flesh shrinks under the surgeon's knife. All its starts and flaws are but the conflicts and misgivings of hope and fear, in the most ordinary but trying circumstances. The "Not a jot, not a jot," has nothing to do with any old legend or prophecy. It is only the last poor effort of human hope, taking refuge on the lips. When after being infected with jealousy by Iago, he retires apparently comforted and resigned, and then without anything having happened in the interim, returns stung to madness, crowned with his wrongs, and raging for revenge, the effect is like that of poison inflaming the blood, or like fire inclosed in a furnace. The sole principle of invention is the sympathy with the natural revulsion of the human mind, and its involuntary transition from false security to uncontrollable fury. The springs of mental passion are fretted and wrought to madness, and produce this explosion in the poet's breast. So when Othello swears "By yon *marble* heaven," the epithet is suggested by the hardness of his heart from the sense of injury: the texture of the outward object is borrowed from that of the thoughts: and that noble simile, "Like the Propontic," &c., seems only an echo of the sounding tide of passion, and to roll from the same source, the heart. The dialogue between Hubert and Arthur, and that between Brutus and Cassius, are among the finest illustrations of the same principle, which indeed is everywhere predominant (perhaps to a fault) in Shakspeare. His genius is like the Nile overflowing and enriching its banks; that of Sir Walter is like a mountain-stream rendered interesting by the picturesqueness of the surrounding scenery. Shakspeare produces his most striking dramatic effects out of the workings of the finest and most intense passions; Sir Walter places his *dramatis personæ* in romantic situations, and subjects them to extraordinary occurrences, and narrates the results. The one gives us what we see and hear; the other what we *are*. Hamlet is not a person whose nativity is cast, or whose death is foretold by portents: he weaves the web of his destiny out of his own thoughts, and a very quaint and singular one it is. We have, I think, a stronger fellow-feeling with him than we have with Bertram or Waverley. All men feel and think, more or less: but we are not all foundlings, Jacobites, or astrologers. We might have been overturned with these gentlemen in a stage-coach: we seem to have been schoolfellows with Hamlet at Wittenberg.

I will not press this argument farther, lest I should make it tedious, and run into questions I have no intention to meddle with. All I mean to insist upon is, that Sir Walter's *forte* is in the richness and variety of his materials, and Shakspeare's in the working them up. Sir Walter is distinguished by the most amazing retentiveness of memory, and vividness of conception of what would happen, be seen, and felt by everybody in given circumstances; as Shakspeare is by inventiveness of genius, by a faculty of tracing and unfolding the most hidden yet powerful springs of action, scarce recognized by ourselves, and by an endless and felicitous range of poetical illustration, added to a wide scope of reading and of knowledge. One proof of the justice of these remarks is, that whenever Sir Walter comes to a truly dramatic situation, he declines it or fails. Thus in the Black Dwarf, all that relates to the traditions respecting this mysterious personage, to the superstitious stories founded on it, is admirably done and to the life, with all the spirit and freedom of originality: but when he comes to the last scene for which all the rest is a preparation, and which is full of the highest interest and passion, nothing is done; instead of an address from Sir Edward Mauley, recounting the miseries of his whole life, and withering up his guilty rival with the recital, the Dwarf enters with a strange rustling noise, the opposite doors fly open, and the affrighted spectators rush out like the figures in a pantomime. This is not dramatic, but melodramatic. There is a palpable disappointment and falling-off, where the interest had been worked up to the highest pitch of expectation. The gratifying of this appalling curiosity and interest was all that was not done to Sir Walter's hand; and this he has failed to do. All that was known *about* the Black Dwarf, his figure, his desolate habitation, his unaccountable way of life, his wrongs, his bitter execrations against intruders on his privacy, the floating and exaggerated accounts of him, all these are given with a masterly and faithful hand, this is matter of description and narrative: but when the true imaginative and dramatic part comes, when the subject of this disastrous tale is to pour out the accumulated and agonizing effects of all this series of wretchedness and torture upon his own mind, that is, when the person is to speak from himself and to stun us with the recoil of passion upon external agents or circumstances that have caused it, we find that it is Sir Walter Scott and not Shakspeare that is his counsel-keeper, that the author is a novelist and not a poet. All that is gossipped in the neighborhood, all that is handed down in print, all of which a drawing or an etching might be procured, is gathered together and communicated to the public: what the heart whispers to itself in secret, what the imagination tells in thunder, this alone is wanting, and this is the great thing required to make good the comparison in question. Sir Walter has not then imitated Shakspeare, but he has given us nature, such as he found and could best describe it; and he resembles him only in this, that he thinks of his characters and never of himself, and pours out his works with such unconscious ease and prodigality of resources that he thinks nothing of them, and is even greater than his own fame.

The genius of Shakspeare is dramatic, that of Scott narrative or descriptive, that of Racine is didactic. He gives, as I conceive, the *common-places* of the human heart better than any one, but nothing or very little more. He enlarges on a set of obvious sentiments and well-known topics with considerable elegance of language and copiousness of declamation, but there is scarcely one stroke of original genius, nor anything like imagination in his writings. He strings together a number of moral reflections, and instead of reciting them himself, puts them into the mouths of his *dramatis personæ*, who talk well about their own situations and the general relations of human life. Instead of laying bare the heart of the sufferer with all its bleeding wounds and palpitating fibres, he puts into his hand a common-place book, and he reads us a lecture from this. This is not the essence of the drama, whose object and privilege it is to give us the extreme and subtle workings of the human mind in individual circumstances, to make us sympathize with the sufferer, or feel as we should feel in his circumstances, not to tell the indifferent spectator what the indifferent spectator could just as well tell him. Tragedy is human nature tried in the crucible of affliction, not exhibited in the vague theorems of speculation. The poet's pen that paints all this in words of fire and images of gold is totally wanting in Racine. He gives neither external images nor the internal and secret workings of the human breast. Sir Walter Scott gives the external imagery or machinery of passion; Shakspeare the soul; and Racine the moral or argument of it. The French object to Shakspeare for his breach of the Unities, and hold up Racine as a model of classical propriety, who makes a Greek hero address a Grecian heroine as *Madame*. Yet this is not barbarous—Why? Because it is French, and because nothing that is French can be barbarous in the eyes of this frivolous and pedantic nation, who would prefer a peruke of the age of Louis XIV. to a simple Greek head-dress!

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